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THE GREATNESS OF MAN
AN ESSAY ON DOSTOYEVSKY AND WHITMAN

THE GREATNESS

AN ESSAY ON
DOSTOYEVSKY
AND WHITMAN

NEW YORK • THOMAS YOSELOFF • LONDON

OF MAN

BY
PERRY D.
WESTBROOK



✓

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TO ANNE, EMILY, AND PAUL

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PREFACE

The ideas in this volume are the outgrowth of many years of teaching American and Russian literature in the New York State College for Teachers at Albany. I claim no special originality for anything written here. The thoughts came first from the great writers discussed and secondly from the numerous profound commentaries on their works. It is doubtful if there is anything really original left to say about Dostoyevsky and Whitman.

But in a sense ideas are always new, even if they were first thought of three thousand years ago. This is the newness of immediacy, of first impact on each generation of minds. Living ideas are always new, then, for their newness or staleness rests in the minds that receive them, not in themselves.

The young men and women at the Albany college are superior persons morally, intellectually, physically, though they would vigorously deny this assertion. In addition, most of them are dedicated to their future profession. As teachers, their chief tools will be their minds with their stores of "cephalic knowledge," as Whitman calls it, and their personalities. They seri-

ously and effectively set about perfecting these two tools. As one of their teachers, I have seen, and experienced vicariously, the effects that these two literary giants of the world's two great powers have had on the minds and spirits of class after class of students passing through our college into a life of devoted and able teaching.

I think, therefore, that we have in our classes an intensity and genuineness of interest rare in American colleges. These students know that the reading of great literature will make them better people and better teachers. More important, the instinctive love of the intelligent human being for ideas is not inhibited in them by any false and blasé sense of sophistication. I am convinced that from discussions of books and ideas in groups of this sort—mainly small seminars of fewer than fifteen participants—something very valuable emerges. The books, if they are still potentially alive, find their life anew in the minds and in the talk of the readers. They once more exert an influence for good or for bad on the individual and the group, and through them their influence lives on into the future.

An idea is alive just in so far as it affects thought and action. To be in a position to have any effect at all it must first be injected into human thinking both by the printed and by the spoken word. The quality of the minds that do the thinking will determine the vitality of the idea. I repeat, were it not for the quality of the minds in which over the years I have seen the thoughts and attitudes of Whitman and Dostoyevsky renew their lives, I would never have had the audacity to attempt a book of this type. Actually the book was in a sense partly written, the material assembled, in those classes—by the students and their teacher together. The experience has been marked by the spirit of youth, of adventure of the highest order, of an activity which, though a pleasure, is freighted with tremendous importance, as is all activity of the young, even their play. If some small

hint of this immediacy, urgency, and profound exhilaration can be transferred to the reader of the pages that follow, I will be more than happy.

The writers spotlighted here are Dostoyevsky and Whitman, two of the intensest lights of world literature. Other authors could have been chosen in their places, and in fact many of these, like Tolstoy, Mann, Hawthorne, Pasternak, are discussed. Literature is as broad as life, and when we admit one or two authors into our intellectual lives, multitudes of others will be thronging at the door and should not be excluded. But we can make their acquaintance better one at a time or in pairs, as here. Surely my choice of authors will be acceptable. The subject of all great thought, all great art and literature, is the greatness of man. Man attains true greatness in his mind and in his spirit. Art and literature are the records of man's pondering on his greatness, marveling at it more rapturously than on even the sublimest works of mere physical nature. In few other writers is this sense of wonder at man's destiny so intense as in Whitman and Dostoyevsky.

Finally, I should like to express my gratitude to Dr. Vivian Hopkins of the New York State College for Teachers for many constructive suggestions concerning style and content; to my wife for typing the manuscript; and to the Research Foundation of the State University of New York for the grant of a summer fellowship in aid of my project.

CONTENTS

PREFACE	7
I	
Two Authors: Two Lands	17
II	
What Is Man?	33
III	
Confession	58
IV	
Penance and Forgiveness	74
V	
Love	88
VI	
Life	106
VII	
The New Man	115
VIII	
The New Society	138
IX	
Conclusion	160
Bibliographical Note	168
Notes	169

BUT ONE MAY WISH THE WORD ART TO MEAN AN
ATTEMPT TO GIVE MEN A CONSCIOUSNESS
OF THEIR OWN HIDDEN GREATNESS.

ANDRÉ MALRAUX

THE GREATNESS OF MAN

I

TWO AUTHORS: TWO LANDS

Whitman is a Prince of Words and a gateway to America.

J. V. JENSON

The aim of the present work [*The Spirit of Russia*] is to furnish an understanding of Russia from the inside through the instrumentality of Russian literature. What I write about Dostoyevski is the core of the undertaking.

T. G. MASARYK

In the nineteenth century, world power and culture centered in Europe. Flanking Europe were two continent-sprawling unknowns: Russia and the United States. One was still a new country in a New World; the other was emerging with startling suddenness and vigor from a medieval sleep in which it had stagnated during Europe's Renaissance. Prophecies were already abroad that one or both of these youthful giants would soon take over Europe's leadership. Most famous was De Tocqueville's, written in 1835:

There are at the present time two great nations in the world, which started from different points, but seem to tend towards the same end. I allude to the Russians and the Americans. Both of

them have grown up unnoticed; and while the attention of mankind was directed elsewhere, they have suddenly placed themselves in the front rank among the nations, and the world learned their existence and their greatness at almost the same time.

All other nations seem to have nearly reached their natural limits, and they have only to maintain their power; but both these are still in the act of growth. . . . These alone are proceeding with ease and celerity along a path to which no limit can be perceived. The American struggles against the obstacles that nature opposes to him; the adversaries of the Russian are men. The former combats the wilderness and savage life; the latter civilization with all its arms. The conquests of the American are therefore gained by the plowshare; those of the Russian by the sword. . . . The principal instrument of the former is freedom; of the latter, servitude. Their starting point is different and their courses are not the same; yet each of them seems marked out by the will of Heaven to sway the destinies of half the globe.¹

De Tocqueville was right about the division of world influence between Russia and the United States. He was wrong in some of the details. America, like Russia, was still a slave state. America did take up the sword in 1848 and 1898 to expand her territory, and in the Civil War the enemy was men, not nature. Nor did Russia rely solely on the sword. The settlement of Siberia constituted as much a fight against nature and savage life as did our expansion to the West. Servitude may have been the chief official weapon, as it still is; yet in the nineteenth century leaders of thought in Russia by no means subscribed to servitude as a weapon or an end in itself. The mission of Russia was to be a liberating one, as was that of the United States. But De Tocqueville was writing early in the century, too early to witness the full flowering of Russian spiritual and intellectual life.

Both countries at that time were cultural colonies of Europe. Since the days of Peter the Great, Russia had looked to the West

for her civilization, even to the extent of adopting French as a second language—or as a first for people of station and learning. The United States, recently cut loose politically from England, still drew heavily on the Old World for her art, literature, science, and philosophy. Intellectuals from both nations flocked to Europe in search of education and aesthetic stimulation, and many became so enthralled with European civilization that they failed to return. In Russia as well as in the United States many an indignant patriot would rant about the need for severing European apron strings.

This ranting was symptomatic. Deep in the heart of each nation stirred aspirations that were already resulting in national identities distinct from those of Europe, the cultural leader. Nations achieve their identities through the pursuit of what they conceive to be their historic missions. Such a concept of mission stems from a nation's image of itself—of its place in history and in relation to God and to other peoples. The image is formed first, and afterward the nation strives to shape itself to the image. The origin of the image is obscure, but most likely it is in the deepest recesses of the folk mind. Here the poets, the philosophers, discover it, refine it, interpret it, spiritualize it (as Whitman would say) and return it to the people. Poets and other artists are indeed, to use Samuel Johnson's phrase, the unseen legislators of mankind. Rome's image of herself as the great civilizer was perfected by Vergil many years before it was brought into reality under Marcus Aurelius. The image of France as the defender of the Christian faith found artistic expression in the *Song of Roland* and underwent at least partial realization in the Crusades a century or so afterwards. Very likely we underestimate literature as a political and cultural force. In the history of almost every great nation there has been a poet who limned the image of that greatness long before its achievement.

To get a glimpse into the soul of a nation one must go to its writers, artists, and philosophers, especially those of reputation and influence within their nation. In mid-nineteenth-century Russia and America, literature was flowering as never before or since—a fact that in itself is indicative of spiritual vigor. Today the reader of these literatures—and both are read throughout the world—may gain insights into the spiritual depths of these nations. There he will descry the image each nation is forming of itself. But if he is observant of present-day culture, he will be dismayed at how far short of these images each nation is after three generations.

For the images were good. They were humane and spiritually exalted, although they contained hints of future weakness. Furthermore the images had striking basic similarities. The two future world powers seemed to share their aspirations—seemed headed into futures identically beneficent for mankind. The images are still alive, doubtless, embedded deep in the mass consciousness of the two peoples. The realities bear little resemblance to the images, and there lies the tragedy.

Today the two colossi face each other across two oceans. Their vast armaments are posed for annihilating blows each against each. Fear and hate are the basis for their precarious coexistence, and all the world shudders at what appears the well-nigh inevitable eventuality. Never before did two nations so need to understand one another; never before were two so far apart in understanding. Yet the nineteenth-century images, so benign, so full of promise for mankind, underlie the national minds of each country. To all men of good will it is a duty to probe far down below the terrors and hates and reveal what is most fundamental.

The task of probing could be a difficult, though never a tedious one. A preliminary glimpse may be revealed by a reading of two supremely great and totally indigenous authors. In

the writing of Whitman, the American vision—the American image of man—is revealed in depth and breadth, in all its surface and inner characteristics. In exploring the potentialities of the human psyche as it might develop in America, Whitman was a leader in a group that included Hawthorne, Poe, and Melville, and, later, Henry James. In assessing the potential of man en masse and as a member of society, and in outlining the American image of man's future social life, Whitman stands alone among all Americans of any century. His insights into the individual soul and into the social life of man complement one another. Together they point to a destiny that the nineteenth century envisaged for America and all mankind.

In Russia another author—one of the all-inclusive geniuses that appear only rarely—reveals also in depth and breadth the image of his country's future. In fact, in one single work, *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoyevsky presents his whole world outlook, all that was in his earlier works in addition to much that is new. Like Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, it is one of the world's great summarizing books, containing as it does the fruits of a lifetime of thought and experience. So vast is the scope of this novel that it approaches being an epic of all humanity as well as of the Russian soul. When Dostoyevsky's vision of man and the world is brought into comparison with the vision of Whitman, an unexpected but very real resemblance appears. This resemblance awaits recognition through the clouds of terror and hate that darken Russian-American relationships far more effectively than the police measures and information blackouts of the iron curtain that so impress modern statesmen.

Whitman and Dostoyevsky were born on the eve of a new era—that of the industrialization of their countries and of huge, swarming cities that were products of the factories as surely as the cloth they spun or the iron they smelted. Both were writers of the city and the new humanity spawned within it. To be sure,

Whitman, a true son of the people, was born in the idyllic countryside near Huntington, Long Island. His parents were both farming people, with strong Quaker convictions which, with their emphasis on love and the Inner Light, were to be a life-long influence on Whitman. Though he roamed the countryside and the seashore in his boyhood and youth, his real roots were sunk in the city, Brooklyn, where his family moved in his early childhood.

"Give me the splendid silent sun," Whitman wrote in one of his most lyrical poems and proceeded to celebrate the joys of the country. But in the second section of the same poem he does an about-face:

Keep your splendid silent sun . . .

Give me faces and streets—give me these phantoms incessant
and endless along these trottoirs!

Give me interminable eyes . . .²

Whitman always insisted that he was a poet of the cities—the vast phantom-filled cities of the dawning industrial era. In Washington, with its swirling transient populations of service men, politicians, the wounded and the dying, and always in Brooklyn and his beloved Manhattan, Whitman eddied with the crowd, keeping his identity as a human droplet at the same time that he merged in the ocean around him. He rode the Brooklyn ferries, hobnobbing with the pilots in the wheel-house, and sat side by side with the teamsters on the driver's seat of the New York omnibuses. He caroused in taverns with workmen and talked and drank in Bohemian restaurants with writers and artists. For Whitman was one of those who thrive on conversation, listening as much as he talked, with all manner of men in all manner of places. And from this talk evolved his poetry and his thought. Dostoyevsky wrote that all over Russia young men were gathering in taverns and talking, talking of man and God

and the future of Russia. The same ferment was taking place in America. Everywhere there were new ideas, new vistas opening up, and men must talk about them, compare and develop their ideas. In the cities, the centers of the new civilization, the talk, the ideas were most fecund.

Dostoyevsky, born in the Moscow charity hospital where his father was a resident physician, was not the man of the people that Whitman was. In fact, in the Siberian prison where he spent four years of his young manhood, Dostoyevsky made himself hated by insisting on his supposed rights as a nobleman. But like Whitman he was fascinated by the "phantoms," the "innumerable eyes" of the city sidewalks, especially those of Petersburg, which he describes as an unreal city rising in the mists of the Neva marshes as if conjured there by a magician. A similar sense of unreality was present to Whitman also, even in his most exalted descriptions of New York. The bay, the ships, the buildings at such moments were mere "appearances," a necessary film that enveloped the soul but lacked objective existence. Dostoyevsky and Whitman were the two great spiritualizers of the engulfing materiality of the nineteenth century. A sense of the unreality of the material world is a first step toward spiritualization—toward gaining, or regaining, the sense of the human soul as transcending and including all forms of earthly existence.

To both Whitman and Dostoyevsky the depraved elements, the phantoms of evil in the crowds, were as significant as the healthy average. Whitman bluntly designated New York as one of the most crime-haunted cities in the world and in his poetry sings of the whore, the debauchee, the syphilitic. Dostoyevsky, scanning the swarming sidewalks, singles out the criminals, the lost souls—the reeling Marmeladovs, the homicidal Raskolnikovs and Rogozhins with their burning, staring eyes. His description of a London crowd at night near the Haymarket is Dantesque:

Here one finds sparkling, expensive garments and rags, and extreme differences of age all at once. The drunken tramp elbows his way through this frightful crowd, and the titled and wealthy gentleman mingles with it. One hears cursing, quarreling, shouting and the gentle supplicating whisper of a still timid beauty. And what beauties they sometimes are!³

Dostoyevsky and Whitman were insatiable observers of the urban life that teemed around them. Both from time to time in their lives were journalists and had the reporter's nose for the unusual and for the typical in the unusual. Dostoyevsky edited several periodicals in the 'fifties, and in the last decade of his life he published *Diary of a Writer*, a series of commentaries on life much in the style of a modern columnist. In these monthly essays Dostoyevsky wrote on a fantastic variety of subjects: notorious criminal cases, suicides, literature, politics. All the ideas implicit in his novels, especially the later ones, were here developed in relation to the passing scene of Russian life. The heroine of *The Possessed*, Lizaveta Nikolaevna, dreams of publishing yearly collections of news articles, anecdotes, and other material illustrative of Russian life. Dostoyevsky's *Diary of a Writer* is essentially just this sort of project, as are his novels, despite their fictional guise, for they all are based on characters Dostoyevsky has known (like Father Zossima in *The Brothers Karamazov*) or events of the day (like the brutal disciplinary murder of Shatov by the revolutionaries in *The Possessed*).

Nor was the reporter in Whitman ever dormant. His method in all his poetry and prose is to use the specific instance, the event of the day, gathered from as wide an area as possible. In his actual newspaper days—confined to his young manhood—his editorials showed the same wide and eager interests as Dostoyevsky's essays. Slavery, reforms, the westward expansion, books, religion were all among his subjects. A favorite and inexhaustible topic for each was the future of his country, for

which each forecast a decisive and, of course, benign role in the betterment of the human lot. Pan-Slavism and Manifest Destiny were the crassest forms these aspirations took with Dostoyevsky and Whitman, and these two philosophies had in common the expansion of a civilization that their exponents felt eminently worth expanding. Neither Dostoyevsky nor Whitman was above rattling the saber. Dostoyevsky recommended the annexation of Constantinople and much of eastern Asia, and to Whitman the absorption of Canada and Latin America into the American republic was merely a matter of course. But in general their patriotism had more spiritual manifestations—the spreading of democracy for Whitman, and for Dostoyevsky the establishment of a world order based on universal Christian brotherhood. Their fervor was so strong they would have quarreled with De Tocqueville's prophecy that Russia and America would share the world between them. Each was convinced that spiritually, at least, his country would sway the entire world. "That star [of world brotherhood] will rise in the east,"⁴ asserts Father Zossima, who speaks many of Dostoyevsky's ideas. And to Whitman, during the Civil War in Washington, the evening star symbolized not only Lincoln but the whole vitalizing force of the people who had produced Lincoln—the Democracy that was to flourish first in "These States" and later embrace all mankind in its brotherly arms.

Both Whitman and Dostoyevsky looked upon Europe as dead, a beautiful graveyard whose influence of decay was to be shunned. Russia to Dostoyevsky was a holy mother. Her earth was to be kissed and washed with one's joyful tears. To Whitman America was the world's "greatest poem." Each desired to further the future greatness of his country. To each the man of letters was a prophet, his calling the sacred one of showing his fellow countrymen "the pathway between reality and the soul." To preach the spiritual significance of the times and the destiny

of the nation and the race was the poet's role, Whitman proudly announced in the Preface to the 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass*. Dostoyevsky, as he reached the end of his days, seemed actually to be the embodiment of the prophet described in Pushkin's great poem:

Athirst in spirit, through the gloom
Of an unpeopled waste I blundered,
And saw a six-winged seraph loom
Where the two pathways met and Sundered.
He laid his fingers on my eyes:
His touch lay soft as slumber lies,—
And like an eagle's, his crag shaken,
Did my prophetic eyes awaken.
Upon my ears his fingers fell
And sound rose—stormy swell on swell:
I heard the spheres revolving, chiming,
The angels in their soaring sweep,
The monsters moving in the deep,
The green vine in the valley climbing.
And from my mouth the seraph wrung
Forth by its roots my sinful tongue;
The evil things and vain it babbled
His hand drew forth and so effaced,
And the wise serpent's tongue he placed
Between my lips with hand blood-dabbled;
And with a sword he clove my breast,
Plucked out the heart he made beat higher,
And in my stricken bosom pressed
Instead a coal of living fire.
Upon the wastes, a lifeless clod,
I lay, and heard the voice of God:
"Arise, O prophet, watch and hearken,
And with my Will thy soul engird,
Roam the gray seas, the roads that darken,
And burn men's hearts with this, my Word."⁵

When Dostoyevsky recited this poem at a Pushkin celebration in Moscow in 1881, the wildly cheering audience was convinced that they saw an incarnation of the poet's vision.

The prophet must see the evil as well as the good and beautiful; he must hear the rush of sea monsters under the waves as well as the flight of angels. Both Dostoyevsky and Whitman had a profound sense of the evil as being as intrinsic to the order of things as the good, and perhaps this perception grew from a sense of their own guilt. Dostoyevsky's deeply ingrained guilt has been analyzed by countless experts, including Freud himself. The consensus is that it stems from Dostoyevsky's subconscious wish for the death of his father, a miserly and sadistic drunkard, who was murdered by his peasants when Dostoyevsky was eighteen. Having wished for his father's death—much as did the older Karamazov brothers for theirs—the author's guilt was aggravated by the event itself and manifested itself in his lifelong suffering from epilepsy, whose comas resemble death. By periodically "dying" Dostoyevsky could atone for his father's death, for which he was unconsciously responsible. This need for self-punishment found other outlets as well—in frenzied gambling, and in attachments to women who humiliated and scorned him. Yet so great was his subconscious craving for punishment that he did his best writing when he was undergoing the acutest mental suffering—say, when he had literally gambled away his jacket and was without a penny in a foreign land with a wife and child to support.

Whitman's guilt is no less evident and is equally a vitalizing force in his writing and thinking. Throughout his works he gives notice of his kinship with the degraded and the criminal:

For me the keepers of convicts shoulder their carbines
and keep watch,
It is I let out in the morning and barr'd at night.⁶

Whitman's English friend, Edward Carpenter, whose life had been revolutionized by reading *Leaves of Grass*, reports that the poet confessed to him: "There is something in my nature *furtive* . . . I think there are truths which it is necessary to envelope or wrap up." Carpenter sensed "a great tragic element in his nature—and [one which] possibly prevented him ever being what is called 'happy in love affairs.'"⁷ That Whitman was an overt homosexual, as this passage suggests, has been almost conclusively determined. His guilt might have been generated by this abnormality, or conceivably it might have had a totally different source.

Both Whitman and Dostoyevsky were keenly aware of human suffering both in themselves and in others, and the place of suffering in their lives is no less than that of guilt. Dostoyevsky personally endured the ultimate in physical hardship while imprisoned in Siberia, not to mention such other lifelong afflictions as his epilepsy and compulsive gambling. Indeed most of Dostoyevsky's biographers express wonder that he was able to survive the Siberian ordeal at all. Whitman, aside from prolonged illness in his later years, knew little personal physical suffering. But more important to each than physical pain was the place of pain as inevitable and perhaps ultimately beneficial in the scheme of human life. The central experience in the life of each was an intense exposure to human suffering. In the case of each this experience had the effect of releasing love in themselves and in others. Who can say whether the release could have occurred under other circumstances, or whether the suffering was necessary for spiritual growth?

In the case of each author this contact with pain came at the height of his powers and lasted for four years—Dostoyevsky's in prison and Whitman's in his ministering to the wounded in the army hospitals in and around Washington. With each, these years of revelation began with a recognition of the true nature

of man in all his evil and all his goodness. To Dostoyevsky prison gave his first contact with the common people of the Russian Empire, Slav and non-Slav. As a "gentleman" he was despised by the prisoners of humble birth, whose resentment of him was only increased by his insistence on his class rights. Yet among the convicts he found combined with their criminality an unsuspected potential of love and selflessness. Here he first glimpsed the tremendous "breadth" of man—the capacity for a myriad of conflicting traits and impulses. Here also was brought home to him the tragedy of the "isolation" of the Russian intellectual like himself, the bottomless chasm that yawned between the people and the learned and professional classes who proposed to reform Russia for these very masses whose character and needs they understood no better than they did those of the Chinese. Though the Siberian years were replete with horror, Dostoyevsky dated from that time the growth of his faith not only in Christ but in the "God-bearing" Russian masses.

Whitman's Civil War experience was not one of personal suffering. Indeed, it was one of intense spiritual fulfillment. In his ministrations to tens of thousands of wounded and dying soldiers he first learned of his own boundless capacity for love and of the magic curative effects of love on the sufferers. To his mother he writes, "I believe that no men ever loved each other as I and some of these sick and dying men have loved each other." And later he writes, "I never knew what American young men were till I have been in the hospitals."⁸ Few will see in this love anything other than the spiritualized affection that Whitman's Quaker mother understood it to be. Whitman's activities in the hospitals were selfless in the highest Christian sense. In his friends' opinion he gave himself with such abandon that he laid during these years the groundwork of his later physical breakdown. Nor was the experience entirely one of ecstatic love of

his fellowmen. Like Dostoyevsky in the Siberian prison camp, Whitman saw the horror as well as the love in the human make-up. "Mother," he writes, "one's heart grows sick of war, after all, when you see what it really is; every once in a while I feel so horrified and disgusted It seems like a great slaughter house"9 Never did Whitman close his eyes to the tragic role of evil in human affairs. To him man is "broad, too broad," to use the words of Dmitri Karamazov.

In Siberia and in the Civil War hospitals Dostoyevsky and Whitman found confirmation of feelings and insights that had appeared in their earlier works. Chief among these was the re-discovery of the divinity or God-bearing capacity of man; or, as St. Paul puts it in a verse unquestionably familiar to both Whitman and Dostoyevsky, "Know ye not that ye are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in ye?" (I Cor. 2:16) That such faith could come from experiences with humanity at its worst, man animalized by war and brutal penal servitude, is a measure of the optimism of these two writers. Whitman, of course, has always had the reputation of being an optimist, more of an optimist than he actually was. But Dostoyevsky is popularly regarded as a "gloomy Russian." Yet André Gide found in him "an aptitude and propensity for happiness." The fact is that Dostoyevsky was not a black pessimist any more than Whitman was an unthinking Pollyanna who could see nothing but "good in mankind." Both were only too keenly aware of the existence of the contradictions of the human soul. Both had witnessed man's capacity, sometimes proclivity, to destroy himself. But both knew that if he would but will it, mankind could create the kingdom of heaven on earth. "Say not, lo here and lo there. The kingdom of heaven is within you." (Luke 17: 20-21) Man would eventually be redeemed by love, both thought. Paradise lies all around us. We need not wait till we die in order to live in it.

The immense significance of these writers, then, lies not only

in the fact that they are representative of the profoundest aspiration of the peoples of the world's two most powerful nations—at least as those nations were on the eve of their greatness. It lies further in the basic similarity of their spirits and of the spirits, therefore, of the nations they so loved. The differences between Dostoyevsky and Whitman are obvious enough: one was a poet, the other a novelist; one was a devout Orthodox Christian, the other seldom lost an opportunity to berate organized religion; one saw in science one of the great hopes of mankind, the other feared science as the destroyer of the spiritual life; one championed an autocracy, the other was a vociferous democrat. But, more deeply, their thought—or, as they would have preferred to call it, their intuitions—was remarkably similar. Man, they felt—rather than reasoned—is a creature in the image of God, endowed with the freedom to determine his own destiny on earth and in eternity, whose chief redemptive faculty is love, but who carries within him a potential of hate that can easily destroy him and his civilization. In this fundamental conviction both authors were opposed to the most advanced thought of their time, which conceived of man as a biological, physiological, and economico-sociological machine, the life and destiny of which were governed by forces outside its control or power of choice—in short, man as conceived in the light of the “discoveries” of Marx, Darwin, and the biochemist Haeckel. Dostoyevsky and Whitman both thought the intellectuals of their day were out of touch with the masses, were ignorant of their nature and needs, and were in error regarding mankind and history in general. Within the Christian era mankind has rejected fatalism—death, if you will—and the most important Christian theologians have allowed for at least some self-determination for individuals and for nations. This faith in man's ability to shape his own destiny, individual and social, is inextricably rooted in all peoples living in the Christian tradition. Dostoyevsky and Whitman, faced

with the new fatalism of science, were simply reaffirming the old truths. They insisted that Christianized mankind, after eighteen hundred years of belief in man's status and dignity as an image of God, a self-determining creature endowed with a knowledge of good and evil, should not lose the sense of his greatness or permit himself to be diminished to the status of a machine or a laboratory test-tube. The function of literature is to teach the greatness of man, to paraphrase Malraux. Too many authors of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have gloried in teaching the smallness and insignificance of man, till mankind has all but lost faith in itself. The writings of Dostoyevsky and Whitman are powerful antidotes to these misgivings.

American and Russian literature "have gone to the verge," says D. H. Lawrence. That is, American and Russian literature have gone the limit in asserting what Emerson called "the infinitude of the private man." And no other authors in either literature came closer to the verge in this respect than did Dostoyevsky and Whitman. Says Stepan Trofimovitch in *The Possessed*: "The infinite and eternal are as essential for man as the little planet on which he dwells"—a sentiment that could stand as the motto of *Leaves of Grass* as well as for all of Dostoyevsky's later work.

II

WHAT IS MAN?

What sort of chimera then is man? What a novelty, what a monster, what a chaos, what a subject of contradiction, what a prodigy! Judge of all things, brainless earthworm, repository of truth, sewer of doubt and error, glory and trash of the universe.

PASCAL

"I am large, I contain multitudes,"¹ writes Whitman, speaking for all humanity.

"Man is broad, too broad,"² says Dmitri Karamazov in Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*. "I would make him narrower."

What do these authors mean by the "broadness," the largeness of man? The answer must be given in some detail, for it is important in the work of both writers. To begin with, man was the sole interest of Dostoyevsky and Whitman. Nature in Dostoyevsky is always incidental. It may be a dark plain over which the desperate Dmitri drives behind a troika at night. Or it may be a starlit evening, mellow with the breath of late summer, in which the ecstatic Alyosha kisses the earth as a pledge of his devotion to life. However it may appear, nature in Dostoyevsky is always a projection of the mood of a human being. His nature

descriptions are always determined by what the British novelist, J. C. Powys, calls "elemental empathy," which is a device of blending the moods of nature with those of men. Dostoyevsky achieves powerful dramatic effects in this way. But descriptions of fields and woods and sky for their own sake, as in Tolstoy, are absent from his pages. Even in his magnificent description of an Alpine lake in *The Possessed*, the picture is presented as seen by the crippled but "holy" idiot Marya, to whom subconsciously the shadow of a mountain cutting across an island represents the cross casting its blessing upon the redeemed earth. Nature in Dostoyevsky is relevant only in its spiritual significance to characters.

Likewise in Whitman's "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" a summer night on Long Island, with the wasted moon sagging in the east and a mocking bird singing its elegy to its dead mate, has significance, not in itself, but because it marks the wakening of a boy to the beauty of death as deliveress of the soul. Again, in "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd" the heart-shaped leaves become identified with the people's love of the murdered Lincoln, and the song of the hermit thrush blends with the poet's own song in praise of "lovely and soothing death." Even a description of a tree in "I Saw in Louisiana a Live-Oak Growing" progresses only three lines before the poet says, "Its look, rude, unbending, lusty made me think of myself," for it makes him wonder "how it could utter joyous leaves standing alone there without its friend near, for I know I could not."³

Like Emerson, Whitman regards nature as existing for the purpose of ministering to the soul of man. In "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" he writes of the material world that enfolds him:

You have waited, you always wait, you dumb, beautiful ministers,
We receive you with free sense at last, and are insatiate hence-
forward,

Not you any more shall be able to foil us, or withhold yourselves
from us,
We use you, and do not cast you aside—we plant you permanently
within us,
We fathom you not—we love you—there is perfection in you also,
You furnish your parts toward eternity,
Great or small, you furnish your parts toward the soul.⁴

Father Zossima in *The Brothers Karamazov* expresses the same conviction of the spiritual meaning of the material world in all its variety:

God took seeds from different worlds and sowed them on this earth and cultivated his garden, and everything came up that could, but what grows lives and is alive only through the feeling of its contiguity with other mysterious worlds. If that feeling becomes weak or is destroyed in you, then what has grown up in you will die. Then you will become indifferent to life and even come to hate it.⁵

In *Raw Youth* the meek and saintly peasant pilgrim, Makar Ivanovich, says to his wife's son, who was born of a union with Makar's master: "Everything is mystery, dear; in all is God's mystery. In every tree, in every blade of grass that same mystery lies hid,"⁶ which corresponds to Whitman's "all truth waits in all things," or "I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey-work of the stars."⁷

The universe is man-centered for Whitman and Dostoyevsky. To them man is still a microcosm, as he was to the medieval mystic. The standard nineteenth-century science-derived concept of man as a speck of dust on another speck of dust rotating in a limitless cloud of dust, which is the stellar universe, was unacceptable to these two writers. Man might be a speck of dust, but it was divine dust, and nothing, not even a blade of grass,

was insignificant. The curious cult of human insignificance, which arose with the breakdown of Christianity, is of course flourishing today. Yet there are signs of its losing the full sway that it enjoyed through the 1920's. The truth is that man, even when he most strongly asserts his insignificance, doesn't really believe in it. Man, after all, is the center of the universe as he knows it, and it is only as he knows it that it can possibly exist for him. Hence the tenacious hold of religion and of writers like Dostoyevsky and Whitman on the hearts of mankind, even when their minds deny.

Man is broad, large, existing at the very center of creation and encompassing all the spiritual and material world. Man is exempt from restrictions. "In all things I go to extremes," says Dostoyevsky, and Whitman glories:

Magnifying and applying come I,
Outbidding at the start the old cautious hucksters. . . .⁸

Dostoyevsky's chief exhibit of the "broadness," the "all-inclusiveness" of man is Dmitri Karamazov, one of his most sympathetic characters and one of the most fascinating in all literature. His life and spiritual development are worth looking at in detail. Dmitri is first presented as a ruffian and a drunken libertine, engaged to a girl of good background from whom he has stolen 1500 roubles to squander on the courtesan Grushenka. Dmitri's father, too, is in pursuit of Grushenka, and the rivalry between father and son is murderous. When we next meet Dmitri he is spying on his father from the grounds of an adjacent house. He has been drinking brandy, and as his brother Alyosha approaches him he is shouting snatches of verse:

Glory be to the Highest in heaven.
Glory be to the Highest in me.⁹

This is the keynote of Dmitri's discordant character—drunkenness, sexual rivalry with his father over a trollop, and song for the Heavenly God who also finds a dwelling in him. From sacred poetry Dmitri passes on to Schiller, quoting at length from a poem describing Ceres' return to earth only to find man sunk in "vilest degradation." Dmitri himself, he assures his brother, is in just such a state of degradation.

The poem goes on to state that man may redeem himself by clinging "forever to his ancient Mother Earth."

"But," cries Dmitri, "the difficulty is how am I to cling forever to Mother Earth. I don't kiss her. I don't rend open her bosom. . . . I go on and I don't know whether I am going to shame or to light and joy. That's the trouble, for everything in the world is a riddle. And whenever I've happened to sink into the vilest degradation (and it's always been happening) I always read that poem about Ceres and man. Has it reformed me? Never! For I'm a Karamazov [the equivalent of saying he's a human being]. For when I do leap into the pit, I go headlong with my heels up, and am pleased to be falling in that degrading attitude and pride myself on it. And in the depths of this degradation I begin a hymn of praise. Let me be accursed. Let me be vile and base, only let me kiss the hem of the veil in which my God is shrouded. Though I may be following the devil, I am thy son, O Lord, and I love Thee, and I feel the joy without which the world cannot stand."¹⁰

"Men are made for happiness," Father Zossima says, "and anyone who is completely happy has a right to say 'I am doing God's will on earth.'"¹¹ The drunken Dmitri senses this truth when he speaks of "the joy without which the world cannot stand." Immediately afterward he recites several stanzas from another poem of Schiller's, the famous "Ode to Joy." Dmitri ends with the lines:

To angels—visions of God's throne,
To insects—sensual lust.

Dmitri, of course, designates himself an insect who finds joy in sensual lust and beauty in Sodom. "Beauty," he cries, "I can't endure the thought that a man of lofty mind and heart begins with the ideal of the Madonna and ends with the ideal of Sodom. What's still more awful is that a man with the ideal of Sodom in his soul does not renounce the ideal of the Madonna . . . Yes, man is broad . . . The awful thing is that beauty is mysterious as well as terrible. God and the devil are fighting there and the battlefield is the heart of man."¹²

Dmitri continues his chase of Grushenka. He almost murders his father's servant Grigory in an attempt to rob his father. He rushes away to a nearby town, where he stages a wild orgy. In the middle of the night the police arrive and accuse him of the murder of his father, who has been found with his skull bashed in. Dmitri is put through a terrible ordeal of questioning and cross-questioning, and is stripped of his clothing—which symbolizes being stripped of his self-respect. Reduced to humiliation and despair, he is spiritually reborn—in a dream, for real change is fundamental, having its origin deep in the subconscious. In his dream he sees a burned-out peasant village on the steppes where the snow is falling. The people are standing in the street, starving. At the milkless breast of one of the women is a wizened babe whose suffering rends Dmitri's heart. From this dream of suffering Dmitri awakes filled with the love of God and humanity. He publicly admits his sin and announces that he is ready to go to the mines where from deep underground he will sing hymns of praise and joy to God. He refuses to cooperate with the alienist produced by his fiancée in the hope of getting him acquitted on grounds of insanity. Dmitri is not a determinist. He accepts personal responsibility for his actions, and will

take refuge behind no well-meaning diminishment of his human capacity for freedom of choice. In his misfortune and suffering he has found within himself a new man of full human stature. "He was hidden in me," Dmitri asserts, "he would never have come to the surface, if it hadn't been for this blow from heaven." Thus a monster of selfishness, who had harbored patricide in his heart, now declares that he goes to prison "for all, because some one must go for all. I didn't kill Father, but I've got to go. I accept it. . . . Oh, yes, we shall be in chains and there will be no freedom, but then, in our great sorrow, we shall rise again to joy, without which man cannot live nor God exist, for God gives joy: it's his privilege—a grand one. Ah, man should be dissolved in prayer."¹³

To Dostoyevsky, and to his readers everywhere, the Karamazovs are deputies for the human race. In the four brothers are represented basic human faculties: intellectuality in Ivan; sensuality in Dmitri; criminality in Smerdyakov; spirituality in Alyosha. But each brother also contains in a lesser degree the traits of the others—and a fifth trait, the brute strength, the tenacity to life, of the Karamazovs or the human species. In Ivan's words, "It's a feature of the Karamazovs it's true, that thirst for life regardless of anything. You have it, no doubt," he says to Alyosha, "but why is it base? The centripetal force on our planet is still fearfully strong, Alyosha."¹⁴ And later Ivan says; "There is strength to endure everything. . . . The strength of the Karamazov—the strength of the Karamazov baseness."¹⁵ This "Karamazov baseness" or "strength" is roughly the equivalent of the Freudian libido, and like the libido its foundations are deep in the subconscious. Yet to Dostoyevsky and to Whitman man's unconscious resources do not consist entirely of atavistic urges, as Freud would teach. The Godlike, as we have seen in Dmitri's dream, also lies in the subconscious, side by side with the bestial, and may break through just as decisively as the bestial. If, as

Freud believes, the dream is the gateway to the subconscious, then Dmitri's dream of love and compassion reveals something as basic in man as the sex drive or the lust for power.

Dmitri is the most Karamazov of the Karamazovs in his inner chaos of sensuality, spirituality, criminality, and intellectuality (Dmitri, in addition to being well acquainted with literature, is a forceful logician) as well as in the Karamazov lust for life that drives him mercilessly along whatever tangent he happens to be on. In him the "broadness of man" is more impressively exemplified than in any other Dostoyevskian character.

The equivalent of Dmitri in Whitman's works is the "I" of such poems as "Song of Myself." Whitman himself, in his lust for life, might facetiously be compared to Dmitri. But the "I" in these poems is not solely Whitman personally; it is frequently all humanity as represented by the bard-prophet in Whitman. And this "I" has a Karamazov breadth.

In all people I see myself, none more and not one a barleycorn less,
And the good or bad I say of myself I say of them.¹⁶

"Song of Myself," Whitman's longest poem, is his most detailed vision of humanity, as *The Brothers Karamazov* is Dostoyevsky's. In the poem humanity itself speaks in the first person, revealing itself in its multiplicity and contradictions, and it is essentially the same humanity that emerges from Dostoyevsky's novels—the same embodiment of infinitely varied gradations of good and evil, beauty and ugliness.

What is commonest, cheapest, nearest, easiest is Me.¹⁷
I am of old and young, of the foolish as much as the wise.¹⁸

This is the meal equally set, this the meat for natural hunger,
It is for the wicked just the same as the righteous, I make appointments with all,

I will not have a single person slighted or left away,
The kept woman, sponger, thief, are hereby invited,
The heavy-lipp'd slave is invited, the venerealee is invited.¹⁹

I am the poet of the Body and I am the poet of the Soul.
The pleasures of heaven are with me and the pains of hell are with
me.²⁰

I am not the poet of goodness only, I do not decline to be the poet
of wickedness also.
What blurt is this about virtue and about vice?²¹

There are more than generalizations in "Song of Myself." The
"I"—whether it be Whitman or the voice of humanity—speaks
for a vast list of specific persons: the suicide who "sprawls on the
bloody floor of the bedroom;" the runaway slave "limpsy and
weak;" the pure contralto singing in the organ loft; four hun-
dred young men massacred in Texas; the sailors who fought in
the battle between the *Serapis* and the *Bon Homme Richard*.
Scenes of slaughter are described with a realism, a sense of horror
similar to those by any "realistic" writer of modern times.

Formless stacks of bodies and bodies by themselves, dabs of flesh
upon the masts and spars. . . .
The hiss of the surgeon's knife, the gnawing teeth of his saw,
Wheeze, cluck, swash of falling blood, short wild scream, and long,
dull, tapering groan,
These so, these irretrievable.²²

Next to these "hell scenes," as he calls similar scenes in the Civil
War, are such tender idyllic vignettes as these:

The little one sleeps in its cradle,
I lift the gauze and look a long time, and silently brush away flies
with my hand.

The youngster and the red-faced girl turn aside up the bushy hill,
I peeringly view them from the top.²³

Or outbursts of sheer fun:

The big doors of the country barn stand open and ready. . . .
I am there, I help, I came stretched atop the load,
I felt its soft jolts, one leg reclined on the other,
I jump from the crossbeams and seize the clover and timothy,
And roll head over heels and tangle my hair full of wisps.²⁴

Murderous, tender, playful—this is man as Whitman and Dostoyevsky envision him: a chaos of contradictions, a cosmos of conflicting passions.

Man then is a being charged with an enormous potential for good and for evil. Further, he is endowed with freedom of choice between good and evil, and this is his most awesome, his most human attribute—one which Immanuel Kant compared in wonder with the “starry heavens” above him. Man may choose to make a paradise of life here and now. “In one day, in one hour, everything could be arranged at once!” cries Dostoyevsky.²⁵ But man’s freedom of choice has degenerated into sheer perversity. Just to assert his will man sometimes intentionally injures, humiliates himself, as does old Karamazov in his buffoonery or the hero of *Notes from Underground*, who at every turn does exactly the thing best calculated to hurt himself and lower his self-esteem. “The laws of self-preservation and of self-destruction are equally powerful in this world,”²⁶ says a character in *The Idiot*. And in *Notes from Underground* the “hero” cites the appalling record of history’s wars to illustrate the zest with which man wills his own destruction. In Whitman, war with its hideous suffering looms awesomely as one of the inexplicable realities of the human lot.

Both Dostoyevsky and Whitman reject any teaching or influence that detracts from man's freedom of choice, even if that freedom is, as often as not, exercised harmfully; even if by wrong use of his freedom man may lose it. Man must be free to abrogate his freedom, to enslave himself to others or to his own passions. Each author emphasizes the extreme difficulty of the right use of this divine gift of freedom. Neither advocates or tolerates sheer license or any such flabby concept as "self-expression" or "doing what you think is right." Freedom demands a deliberate choice of a rule of life, both moral and intellectual. This is the meaning of Dostoyevsky's "Grand Inquisitor" chapter in *The Brothers Karamazov*. Ivan Karamazov rebels against a universe in which God permits suffering, especially the suffering of children. In his "poem" of the Grand Inquisitor, Ivan traces back the flaw in the moral order to Christ's rejection of the three temptations of the devil in the desert: the temptations of turning stones to bread, of leaping from the temple, and of ruling the nations of the world with the sword of Caesar. Had Jesus succumbed to these temptations of the devil he would have freed mankind not only from hunger, but from doubt and from bloodshed. By miracle and mystery He would have so impressed man that man would never have questioned His divinity. By unifying the nations of the world by the sword He would have eradicated war. The planet would have been inhabited by "millions of happy babes," free of worry, free of fear, free of hunger. And yet Jesus rejected these opportunities. He demanded a loyalty freely given, not extorted by miracle, mystery, and power.

And now in Ivan's poem a dignitary of the Spanish Inquisition is upbraiding Jesus, who has returned to earth and been immediately thrown into prison. "Thou didst desire man's free love, that he should follow Thee freely, enticed and taken captive by Thee. In place of the rigid ancient law, man must

hereafter with free heart decide for himself what is good and what is evil. . . . But didst Thou not know he would at last reject Thy image and Thy truth, if he is weighed down with the fearful burden of free choice?"²⁷ The Inquisitor—the spokesman of a religion that Dostoyevsky feels deprives man of his freedom—has given man what in his weakness he craves: "someone to worship, someone to keep his conscience, and some means of uniting all in one unanimous . . . ant-heap. . . ."²⁸ To Dostoyevsky, as to Pasternak more recently, the significance of Christ was in His placing full moral responsibility upon the individual rather than on the State or any other organization. Insofar as the Roman Catholic Church took unto itself the individual's responsibility of free choice, it was to Dostoyevsky anti-Christian. The great strength of the Eastern Church, he felt, lay in its preservation of this basic freedom. However, prejudiced though he undoubtedly was, it is an error to take "The Grand Inquisitor" chapter as an anti-Catholic diatribe. Dostoyevsky himself emphasized that in this chapter he was speaking directly to the political reformers, the builders of modern towers of Babel, that is, socialistic and other sociopolitical short cuts to heaven which deprive man of his freedom of choice between good and evil. Stripped of this choice, man, according to Dostoyevsky, loses his dignity. "Do you despise or respect mankind, you, its coming saviours?"²⁹ asks Dostoyevsky of the reformers of his day.

No one would accuse Dostoyevsky of confusing license with freedom. But Whitman has often been accused of just this weakness. Yet Whitman was as far as Dostoyevsky from advocating an irresponsible freedom. Emerson, when subjected to a similar accusation by people who had misunderstood his essay "Self-Reliance," answered, "Try it for a day," implying how difficult was this kind of freedom, which places the full burden of choice on the individual. He was sorry, he said, that he hadn't

entitled the essay "God-Reliance," for what he advocated was not guidance by whim but by God—the best within us—unshackled by any organization or convention or creed imposed from without. Whitman, an admirer of Emerson, was of like mind. Man must free himself from all rigorous, prefabricated codes of belief and conduct. More extreme than Dostoyevsky, he rejected all organized religions, not just one, as restricting the scope of individual self-determination. But Whitman did not reject Christ, whose mission on earth he conceived of as the teaching of the transcendency of the individual soul. He would have concurred eagerly with Dostoyevsky's conviction that "Christ walked on earth to show mankind that even in its earthly nature the human spirit can manifest itself in heavenly radiance, in the flesh, and not merely in a dream or ideal—and that this is both natural and possible."³⁰

The human soul, whose absoluteness and immortality was established by Christ, can survive only in freedom. The Grand Inquisitor's millions of happy babes "will peacefully expire and beyond the grave they will find nothing but death"³¹ because when freedom was killed in them their souls too withered and died. But it must be real freedom, "freedom," in Whitman's words, "from the painful constipation and poor narrowness of ecclesiasticism . . . freedom from party rings and mere conventions in Politics—and better than all, a general freedom of One's-Self from tyrannic vices, habits, appetites, under which every man of us, (often the greatest brawler for freedom) is enslaved."³² (Here we are reminded of the social revolutionary in Dostoyevsky who almost betrayed his cause for a bribe of cigarettes.) Yet freedom is more than just the striking off of these shackles, about the release from which Dostoyevsky and Whitman would agree. To both it is more importantly a voluntary submission to law. In words that Dostoyevsky would unquestionably approve, Whitman writes "While we are from

birth to death the subjects of irresistible law, enclosing every movement and minute, we yet escape, by a paradox, into true free-will. Strange as it may seem, we only attain to freedom by a knowledge of, and implicit obedience to, Law. Great—unspeakably great—is the Will! the free Soul of man! At its greatest, understanding and obeying the laws, it can then, and then only, maintain true liberty. For there is to the highest, that law as absolute as any—more absolute than any—the Law of Liberty. [“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.” (*Gal. 5:1*)] The shallow . . . consider liberty a release from all law, from every restraint. The wise see in it, on the contrary, the potent Law of Laws, namely the fusion and combination of the conscious will, or partial individual law, with those universal, eternal, unconscious ones, which run through all Time, pervade history, prove immortality, give moral purpose to the entire objective world, and the last dignity to human life.”³³

“Truly . . . all things are good and splendid, because all is truth . . . ,”³⁴ says Father Zossima. They are the words of the mystic that lives in the core not only of Dostoyevsky’s being, but also of Whitman’s, for they express the basic mystical experience, the sense of harmony and unity that transcends even the keenest awareness of evil. Both Dostoyevsky and Whitman believed in the reality of what Father Zossima called “contacts with other worlds,” that is, with the Divine. Each may be classed as a mystic; each had experienced the mystical transport or ecstasy. In several of his novels—notably *The Idiot* and *The Possessed*—Dostoyevsky describes what were undoubtedly his own epileptic seizures. The preliminary to these seizures was a brief period of rapture, “when you suddenly feel the presence of the eternal harmony perfectly attained.”³⁵ So blissful is the experience that the soul can endure only five seconds of it, and those five seconds alone are worth the whole of life. Nor does it matter that it is the symptom of a disease; the experience is

nonetheless real. Of course, Dostoyevsky doesn't limit the mystical state solely to the diseased. Completely healthy characters in his novels also enter into it. The pilgrim Makar Ivanovitch in *Raw Youth* is a mystic. So also are Father Zossima and his brother Markel. Alyosha in *The Brothers Karamazov* walks out into the night from the room where the body of his beloved elder lies: "The silence of the earth seemed to melt into the silence of the heavens. . . . Oh! in his rapture he was weeping even over those stars, which were shining to him from the abyss, and 'he was not ashamed of his ecstasy.' It was as though threads from all those innumerable worlds of God met all at once in his soul. . . ." ³⁶

This is traditional mysticism—the transport, the feeling of unity with the whole order of things. It is exactly paralleled by numerous passages in Whitman's poetry and prose. The feeling of identity: "miracle of miracles, beyond statement, most spiritual and vaguest of earth's dreams, yet hardest basic fact, and only entrance to all facts" ³⁷—described in *Democratic Vistas* and held to be the foundation of all true religion—is bona fide mysticism. In *Leaves of Grass* such poems as "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking," and "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd" are prolonged mystical utterances. "Song of Myself" contains several expressions of mystical union with the earth in the same spirit as that of the passage in which Alyosha falls upon the ground and waters it with his tears:

Press close bare-bosom'd night—press close magnetic nourishing
night!

Night of south winds—night of the few large stars!
Still nodding night—mad naked summer night.

Smile O voluptuous cool-breath'd earth!
Earth of the slumbering and liquid trees! ³⁸

There are sexual overtones perhaps (common enough in mystic writing) in Whitman's passage that are absent from Dostoyevsky's, but the result is the same: contact with "other worlds" or with the Divine. Contact between the body and the earth is standard mystical symbolism for this union of the soul with God. To Whitman the symbolism was habitually enacted in his daily life, for he loved to lie on the grass or the sand of a beach for hours on end, letting his thoughts and moods wander where they would. In "Song of Myself" he urges his soul,

Loaf with me on the grass, loose the stop from your throat,
Not words, not music or rhyme I want, not custom or lecture, not
even the best,
Only the lull I like, the hum of your valved voice.³⁹

Dostoyevsky certainly was not given to loafing on the grass, but he was strongly influenced by a philosophical group called the *Pochvenniki* (*pochva* means soil, ground) who advocated a return to the soil, the people, the foundation of things, as a means of revitalizing the mind and heart. The idea is beautifully and delicately expressed in the parable-like story, "The Peasant Marei," in which Dostoyevsky describes a childhood experience of being scared by an imaginary wolf. One of his father's serfs, Marei, had made the sign of the Cross over him and tenderly touched his lips with his earth-soiled finger to soothe his fright. During his terrible years in Siberia the memory returned to Dostoyevsky like a benediction and restored to him his love of the people and his love of life.

To Dostoyevsky and Whitman, the seeds of spiritual maturing are sown far back in childhood. The life of the soul is organic, unified. What comes to it in adulthood like a revelation has had its inception at the beginning of its growth, though these seeds may lie dormant for decades. "Some good sacred memory, preserved from childhood," says Alyosha, "is perhaps the best

education. If a man carries many such memories with him into life, he is saved to the end of his days. . . ."40 Similarly, Whitman in "There Was a Child Went Forth" traces the seed time of his life, and in "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" he isolates the one moment in his childhood when he experienced spiritual awakening. Leaving his bedroom late at night, night after night, the boy walks down to the seashore to observe two nesting mockingbirds. One night there was only one bird there, plaintively mourning the death of its mate. Whitman says, "My own songs awakened from that hour," though actually he wrote no verse till twenty years later.

In the nineteenth century most intellectuals outside the clergy had rejected the idea of the immortality of the human soul. If man was a machine and hence without a soul—as such diversified thinkers as Huxley and Mark Twain believed—then like a machine he would vanish, disintegrate into his constituent molecules. In contrast Dostoyevsky and Whitman strongly upheld the Judaeo-Christian doctrine of the soul and its immortality. To Dostoyevsky man without immortality is a meaningless joke. Life in such a scheme loses purpose; the moral law is nullified. In Ivan Karamazov's famous phrase, "everything would be lawful"⁴¹ without immortality. Crime would become the rational way of life; one reptile would devour another. Man would set himself up as a god, a man-god—and would proceed to live according to the law of the jungle. This, Dostoyevsky rejects. "In all is God's mystery," says Makar Ivanovitch in *Raw Youth*, "and the greatest mystery of all is what awaiteth the soul of man in the world to come."⁴² But that something—not nothingness—awaits us, Dostoyevsky staunchly maintains throughout his later writings.

Whitman had more definite ideas concerning death and the immortality of the soul than did Dostoyevsky. To him "lovely and soothing death" is the great spiritualizer, "the deliveress of

the soul" from the "excrementitious body." Death, he assures us, is not what we think it is, that is, annihilation.

What do you think has become of the young and old men?
And what do you think has become of the women and children?

They are alive and well somewhere,
The smallest sprout shows there is really no death. . . .

Has any one supposed it lucky to be born?
I hasten to inform him or her it is just as lucky to die, and I know
it.⁴³

Death is one of the insistent facts of nature to be accepted joyously. To the boy Whitman, being first awakened on the Long Island beach to the transcendent meanings of life, the sea whispered only the one word: "Death, death, death, death, death." And it is that word, the earliest of the poet's insights, that aroused in the child

the fire, the sweet hell within
The unknown want, the destiny of me.⁴⁴

Yet neither author was without moments of devastating doubt. In one of his letters Dostoyevsky writes: "I tell you . . . I am a child of the age, a child of unfaith and doubt now and (I know it) shall remain so. . . . What terrible torture has the thirst to believe cost me and still costs me. . . . However, God sometimes sends me moments in which I am entirely serene; in these moments I love and find I am loved by others, and in such moments I have formed a credo in which everything is clear and holy for me."⁴⁵ Paul Tillich asserts that faith without doubt is an impossibility, just as good is impossible without the existence of evil. Faith in, and doubt of, God are not two opposed con-

cepts but are two coexisting worlds of the spirit. The act of faith preserves one's faith in God in the face of inscrutable calamity and injustice, as was the case with Job. This act of faith gains its merit from the temptation, the reasons not to believe, and when so achieved makes God rejoice in his major creation, man.

These moods of doubt in Whitman were frequent and profound—a fact overlooked by those who subscribe to the myth of the Good Gray Poet. In "Prayer of Columbus," written by Whitman after his stroke, he sees a resemblance between the explorer's last days and his own.

A batter'd, wreck'd old man,
Thrown on this savage shore far, far from home,⁴⁶

he questions the meaning of his whole life. Has he uttered a prophet's thoughts or has he been raving? What, after all, does he know of life or of himself? Perhaps his life's work, past and present, is nothing but a mockery. Yet he will cling fast to God, though his "hands and limbs grow nerveless" and his "brain feels rack'd, bewilder'd." These utterances of doubt Whitman placed in *Leaves of Grass* as integral to his own spiritual biography and to the spiritual life of mankind in general. In such moods he is experiencing the spiritual "dryness" known to all mystics. These "downcast hours," as he calls them, press upon him like blankets of lead, the earth becomes a "chamber of mourning," and he hears

the o'erweening, mocking voice,
Matter is conqueror—matter triumphant only, continues onward.⁴⁷

"The devil will hold his empire over humanity."⁴⁸ says Dostoevsky in *The Idiot* and in his writings in general; and in Whitman's work the devil enjoys a role rare for him in the rational

nineteenth century. The devil in both writers is the doubter, the denier, the rebel in each human soul. In *The Brothers Karamazov*, where the devil appears as an hallucination to Ivan on the brink of insanity, he embodies all that is "nasty" in Ivan's thinking, which is the thinking of the intelligentsia of Russia. All of Ivan's mocking, negating, compromising ideas the devil feeds back to him, much to Ivan's disgust. The devil is here the intellect, proud, shallow (in comparison with intuition and feeling) which rejects God and immortality and sets up man as supreme in the universe. He is a shabby fellow—a threadbare Russian landowner with a generous coating of European culture and several blueprints for reform. His function is to tempt the intellect through pride, to stray. Yet Dostoyevsky would have us believe that his existence is necessary. If the devil exists, God must exist; good and evil are necessary for each other's existence.

Whitman also finds a major role for the devil—the spirit whose pride leads to a denial of God. To accommodate Satan, he expands the Trinity to a square: the Father, the Son, *Satan*, and the Holy Spirit. This is, however, more a rhetorical device on Whitman's part than a statement of belief in any inherent evil in the Godhead. At any rate, in "Chanting the Square Deific" he presents the One, the Father—Jehovah, Brahma, Kronos—as the implacable lawgiver. The consolator, the Son, is of course Christ, though Whitman rather lamely represents him by Hermes and Hercules as well. The consolator comforts, forgives, loves mankind, and furnishes the mercy withheld by the stern father, the One. The "Santa Spirita" is the "breather of life," "essence of forms," the inspirer of the prophets' and poets' songs. And finally,

Aloof, dissatisfied, plotting revolt,
Comrade of criminals, brother of slaves,
Crafty, despised,⁴⁹

is Satan, "still alive," though it was thought, by the liberal theologians apparently, that he "was baffl'd, dispell'd." Proud, defiant, warlike, permanent, "equal with any, real as any," Satan broods "with many wiles" in the heart of man. He is a more impressive devil, in appearance, than Dostoyevsky's shabby landowner, but his spiritual negations are the same.

As a consequence of his acceptance of the presence and power of evil in the universe, as symbolized by the devil, Dostoyevsky admits the possibility of total evil among human beings. A number of Dostoyevsky's characters are the embodiments of evil and nothing else, "evil according to nature," like Claggart in Melville's *Billy Budd*. One such character is Smerdyakov in *The Brothers Karamazov* and another, personally known to Dostoyevsky in Siberia, is a convict of whom Dostoyevsky says, "Fire, plague, famine, no matter what scourge, is preferable to the presence of such a man in human society."⁵⁰ The universe's most appalling manifestations of evil are human ones. Yet in the same prison with the monster just described is the innocent Tartar, Ali, who, Dostoyevsky says, was one of those "natures so spontaneously good and endowed by God with such great qualities that the idea of their getting perverted seems absurd."⁵¹

Whitman doesn't limit "total depravity" to a few isolated men, but sees whole masses of humanity in the grip of it. In the Civil War he had witnessed in the armies, North and South, "the wolf's, the lion's lapping thirst for blood—the passionate, boiling volcanoes of human revenge for comrades, brothers slain—with the light of burning farms, and heaps of smutting, smouldering black embers—and in the human heart everywhere black, worse embers. . . ."⁵² And in the prison camps he sees even more incredible horrors: "Starvation, lassitude, filth, vermin, despair, swift loss of self-respect, idiocy, insanity, and frequent murder were there. . . . The guards would occasionally,

and on the least pretense, fire into the prison from mere demonism and wantonness."⁵³

Dostoyevsky and Whitman prescribe the same antidotes to the devil's poison of doubt and rebelliousness. These are "active love" and joyous worship of God and His creation. Madame Hohlakov in *The Brothers Karamazov* complains to Father Zossima that she is unable to believe in the immortality of the soul. The elder exhorts her to love, not in dreams, but in reality. This will not be easy, for love in action requires fortitude and hard labor. Anyone can "love humanity" and dream of reforming it, even of sacrificing one's life to it. But to love individuals in deeds and not in words is an infinitely more challenging task. Yet only with such love does one regain faith in God and hence in immortality. Faith is rooted in and grows from active love, not from mere thoughts of love. Faith, in the final analysis, is action. The believer must become what he believes. If he believes God is love, and that he is "the image of God," then his life must be an embodiment of love.

Dostoyevsky never achieved in real life the sustained practice of active love. But Whitman's life, during the Civil War at least, was a living demonstration of Father Zossima's great Christian precept. In the past, worshipful biographers of Whitman have presented him as a second Incarnation. Whitman, however, was far from being a second Jesus. His vainglory alone would be sufficient to exclude him from the role. Yet the modern tendency to reduce Whitman to a sexual deviate whose every action was designed solely to satisfy his abnormal craving is equally regrettable. Homosexual or not, Whitman achieved something resembling Christlike stature in his activities during the War. "These soldiers know how to love . . . when once they have the right person and the right love offered them,"⁵⁴ he wrote to his mother. Had this been a guilty love—and Whitman was apparently aware at times of his abnormality—he would

scarcely have written about it to his mother whom he idolized. It is doubtlessly admissible to describe his love of the wounded soldiers as sublimated homosexual love, but this in no way detracts from it. Most of the constructive side of human living is achieved through sublimation of primitive emotions. Sublimation is perhaps the greatest and most characteristic human ability. Thus, nourished by these experiences of selfless love Whitman's soul flowered into full maturity. For Father Zossima's doctrine teaches that the soul not only creates its own belief in immortality but through love creates the very fact of immortality itself. Hell, the death of the soul, is "the suffering of no longer being able to love."⁵⁵ Those who fail to give themselves in love will find only death, like the Grand Inquisitor's millions of happy babes who have never had to choose between love and hate. As Whitman says in a famous line, "Whoever walks a furlong without sympathy walks to his own funeral drest in his shroud."⁵⁶ In the poem "Of the Terrible Doubt of Appearances," Whitman describes how his doubts, too, are scattered by love, for to Whitman as to Dostoyevsky love is immortality and immortality is love.

When he whom I love travels with me or sits a long while holding
me by the hand . . .
Then I am charged with untold and untellable wisdom, I am silent,
I require nothing further,
I cannot answer the question of appearances or that of identity
beyond the grave,
But I walk or sit indifferent, I am satisfied. . . .⁵⁷

The doubts, like all the deepest questions of faith, are unanswerable in words, but they are answerable in deeds, in love, and the answers are sufficient unto the soul. The mystery of what lies beyond the grave is insoluble except by love.

The other antidote is joy. Whitman's whole poetic output is a vast paean of joy at the miracle of life.

It is not chaos or death—it is form, union, plan—it is eternal life—it is Happiness.⁵⁸

Father Zossima believes that happiness is God's will for man on earth. Schiller's "Ode to Joy," quoted by Dmitri, sets the key for this motif in *The Brothers Karamazov*, and it is a motif found everywhere in Dostoyevsky by those who do not permit their vision to be darkened by the myth of "Russian gloom." This joy in the mere fact of his own being is man's supreme tribute and duty to God; it is the reason for man's very existence. It is a tribute man must pay to his Creator even in the hours of greatest agony. Says Father Zossima: "The creator, just as on the first days of creation He ended each day with praise: 'that is good that I have created,' looks upon Job and again praises His creation. And Job praising the Lord serves not only him but all His Creation for generations and generations, and forever and ever, since for that he was ordained."⁵⁹

Dostoyevsky's talent was called "cruel" and Whitman's "bestial" by their fellow countrymen, because they each had a vision of man that shocked conventional readers of the day. In later years many have felt that their conception of man may possibly herald a spiritual break-through for humanity as was promised nineteen centuries ago. St. John had the same vision when he proclaimed to mankind their potential of becoming "Sons of God." In the labyrinths of ecclesiasticism that followed the first centuries of Christianity, the mysticism of John was lost to all but a few. In unmasking the whole man in all his evil and all his glory, Dostoyevsky and Whitman went beyond even John and did indeed, as D. H. Lawrence said, approach the verge. In their pages the older morality and concepts, bourgeois and

feudal, are gone. Son is pitted against father; "romantic" love is reduced to a chaos of lust and idealism, hate and sensuality; reason is swept aside and naked will substituted for it; war is presented as butchery. There remain only the New Testament rudiments: love of God and humanity (*agape*), man's freedom to choose between good and evil, joy in the wonder of existence. Man is born anew, out of the corruptions and hypocrisies, into the eternal verities—into a new Eden:

As Adam early in the morning,
Walking forth from the bower refresh'd with sleep,
Behold me where I pass, hear my voice, approach,
Touch me, touch the palm of your hand to my body as I pass,
Be not afraid of my body.⁶⁰

III

CONFESSION

To Dostoyevsky and Whitman the life of the individual soul is all-important, beyond the life of society or the historical process. The quality of any society is determined by the quality of the individuals in it, not vice versa as has commonly been held from the mid-nineteenth century onward. Insistence upon the worth of the individual is, of course, a major contribution of Judaeo-Christianity. Dostoyevsky and Whitman are both preservers of this tradition. Both, moreover, base their beliefs concerning the growth and redemption of the human soul on the Christian doctrine of salvation: confession, penance, forgiveness.

Whoever degrades another degrades me,
And whatever is done or said returns at last to me,¹

writes Whitman in "Song of Myself" and goes on to assert

I am not the poet of goodness only, I do not decline to be the poet
of wickedness also.

Throughout his writing, Whitman repeatedly proclaims the community of human guilt, the commonalty of moral responsibility, the involvement of each in all.

In all people I see myself, none more and not one a barley-corn less,
And the good or bad I say of myself I say of them.²

Not a mutineer walks handcuff'd to jail but I am handcuff'd to
him and walk by his side.

(I am less the jolly one there, and more the silent one with sweat
on my twitching lips.)

Not a youngster is taken for larceny but I go up too and am tried
and sentenced.³

You felons on trial in courts,

You convicts in prison cells, you sentenced assassins chain'd and
handcuff'd with iron,

Who am I too that I am not on trial or in prison?⁴

Whitman in these verses is revealing more than his empathy with all humanity, his ability to step into the shoes of others and feel their feelings and think their thoughts. He is sharing their guilt, and he wishes them to know of his. He is attacking self-righteousness, but he is also doing more than that. A man may not cut himself off from the rest of humanity, even on the basis of his presumed goodness. So long as there is one bit of evil in the world, we are all responsible for it. This is one of the perennial lessons of Christianity, and to Whitman it is a message of major importance. He himself carried his own heavy burden of personal guilt, and in so doing he was sharing the common lot of man. At times at least the self-styled lusty and robust Whitman sounds more like a medieval ascetic castigating himself for his real or imagined sins:

Let others deny the evil their enemies charge against them—but how can I the like?

Nothing ever has been, or ever can be, charged against me, half as bad as the evil I really am.⁵

Dostoyevsky was an avid student of crime and guilt. In his *Diary of a Writer* he discusses the psychological aspects of many criminal cases of his day, and of course in each of his major novels crimes and criminals figure largely. Nor, as we have seen, is there any doubt that he suffered from strong guilt feelings, stronger than Whitman's. Dostoyevsky's guilt is reflected in many of his characters. Dmitri Karamazov considers himself an insect, Ivan calls himself a scoundrel, even Alyosha, meek and innocent as he is, feels pangs of guilt. The universality of guilt is a major theme in *The Brothers Karamazov*, as it is in *Crime and Punishment* and all of Dostoyevsky's later work. Each of the Karamazov brothers is guilty to some extent of his father's death. Ivan and Dmitri both willed the father's death, and Ivan compounded his guilt by callously leaving the old man in his hour of mortal danger. Alyosha erred morally through allowing himself to be so engrossed in his private grief over Father Zossima's death that he forgot his father and brothers.

The manner in which a person may unconsciously become an accomplice in a crime is developed with great subtlety in the case of Ivan. A man of brilliant intellect and generous impulses, he would not for a moment entertain conscious thoughts of killing any man, much less his father. Yet in his conversations with Alyosha he reserves to himself the right to wish for his father's death, assuring his brother that wishes cannot kill. Ivan, an advanced, "Westernized" thinker, rejects the Biblical warning that he who desires another's death commits murder in his heart. What follows beautifully illustrates the truth of this warning. Smerdyakov, the bastard half-brother of Ivan and

a criminal psychopath who hates the elderly Karamazov, senses Ivan's wish that his father die. Smerdyakov believes that Dmitri will kill the old man in order to secure for himself Grushenka, the courtesan with whom father and son are in love, and in order to steal 5,000 roubles that the father is keeping in his room to give Grushenka when and if she decides to come to him. Smerdyakov has told Dmitri of this money and has informed him of certain signals that Grushenka is to use to gain admittance to the house late at night. Smerdyakov feels that he has set a death trap for the old man by imparting these details to Dmitri, who has publicly threatened to do away with his father. He expects Dmitri to commit the murder within the next night or two, as soon as Ivan, who had been staying at the house, goes away. Smerdyakov will clear himself by feigning an epileptic fit. He tells Ivan of these circumstances, though he doesn't explicitly say that he has planned things to happen that way. He only *fears* that Dmitri will murder the father and that he himself will have a fit. He suggests that Ivan leave for a nearby village in order to clear himself of any suspicion in what is bound to happen.

Ivan only half understands the real intent of Smerdyakov, for his brilliant mind, which should see at once through such transparent schemings, has been clouded by the wish for his father's death. Had the wish not been present, he would have sensed immediately what Smerdyakov was up to and would have taken measures to save his father. In fact, Smerdyakov assumed all along that Ivan was aware of his real intentions. He was talking deviously more to exhibit his own cleverness than for any other reason. But, only half understanding, Ivan flies into a rage with this half-brother, whom he hates because he unconsciously recognizes in him a projection of his own submerged bestiality that would gladly have his father murdered. The effect as the two converse is uncanny. Smerdyakov seems to blend into Ivan, become his double. It is as if Ivan had split into two and the two

halves were debating with one another. Thus Smerdyakov suggests, without explicitly stating, the benefits that might come to Ivan on the death of his father by Dmitri's hand: a hated parent will be killed (Old Karamazov had sadistically abused Ivan's and Alyosha's mother); with Dmitri's conviction a rival in love will be removed, for Ivan is in love with Dmitri's fiancée; Ivan's share of the father's legacy will be increased, since by law the criminal brother will lose his share. At last Ivan bursts out angrily: "I am going away to Moscow tomorrow if you care to know."⁶ At that moment the murder is as surely committed, the guilt as squarely on Ivan, as if he had set the mechanism of a time bomb to be hidden in his father's room. Yet Ivan does not admit his guilt to himself till months later.

At two o'clock in the morning after his talk with Smerdyakov, Ivan leaves his room and walks out on the landing in his father's house. Downstairs he hears his father pacing back and forth in expectation of Grushenka. Unconsciously Ivan is spying on his father, checking the accuracy of Smerdyakov's story. But at the time he doesn't realize that he is spying. Only later does he come to regard this as the most shameful act of his life. A sense of guilt—still unattached to any specific act—overwhelms him next day on the Moscow train. "I am a scoundrel,"⁷ he whispers to himself.

Months after his father's murder the truth of his deep complicity comes home to him. Twice he has interviewed Smerdyakov, fascinated by him as by the worse half of his own self. Each time he comes away still ignorant of both Smerdyakov's and his guilt. Finally for the third time he visits Smerdyakov, who lives in a shabby cottage, where one can hear the cockroaches rustling behind the wallpaper. On the way there, in a snowstorm, Ivan jolts into a drunken peasant, knocking him down and leaving him in the street, perhaps to freeze. So hardened is his soul in its struggle to establish its own guiltlessness that all compassion

has withered away within it and Ivan in his self-preoccupation is like a dead man. "Whoever walks a furlong without sympathy walks to his funeral. . . ." At Smerdyakov's, in one of literature's great scenes, Smerdyakov reveals to his half-brother the terrible depth of his guilt.

"Aren't you tired of it? Here we are face to face; what's the use of going on keeping up a farce. . . . You murdered him; you are the real murderer, I was only your instrument, your faithful servant, and it was following your words I did it."

"Did it? Why, did you murder him?" Ivan turned cold.

Something seemed to give way in his brain and he shuddered all over. . . .

"You don't mean to say you really didn't know?" Smerdyakov faltered.

Ivan still gazed at him, and seemed unable to speak. . . .

"Do you know, I am afraid you are a dream, a phantom sitting before me," he muttered.⁸

And in fact Smerdyakov is a sort of phantom—that of his cold compassionless intellect which betrayed the better part of him, the sympathetic human being he really was; which forced itself to reason, in accord with the latest theories of evolution, that all things are lawful and one reptile will, and should, devour another, and that as a man of science he can do nothing about it. Smerdyakov, as he discloses that in reality it was he, not Dmitri, who killed the old libertine, reveals that it was Ivan's theories that finally determined him to go on with the crime. After all, if Ivan's beliefs were correct, it would not be a crime, for there is no such thing as crime,

Ivan resolves to make a clear breast of his guilt the next day in court. On the way home under the humanizing effect of this decision, he picks up the peasant he has left in the snow and sees that he gets food and shelter. But the impulse away from self is not strong enough in Ivan. That night he lapses into "brain

fever" and the next day bursts raving into court, proclaiming the universal criminality of mankind, but proclaiming it as a natural, a biological fact that cannot be changed. Incapable of assuming personal guilt, he places the blame for his deed on the universal and natural degeneracy of mankind.

"It was [Smerdyakov], not my brother, killed our father. He murdered him and I taught him to do it. . . . Who doesn't desire his father's death?"

"Are you in your right mind?" broke involuntarily from the President.

"I should think I'm in my right mind . . . in the same nasty mind as all of you . . . as all these . . . ugly faces. . . . They all desire the death of their fathers. One reptile devours another. . . . If there hadn't been a murder of a father, they'd have been angry and gone home ill-humored. It's a spectacle they want! *Panem et circenses!* Though I am one to talk! Is there any water? Give me a drink of water, for Christ's sake."⁹

Ivan's case dramatically illustrates how one may be involved unknowingly in what appears to be another's crime. Nor does the fact that we are unaware of our complicity exonerate us. Ivan's guilt lay in his hate for his father and in his intellectualism, devoid of love and compassion. On these counts he was guilty, and it is from these lacks in the human soul that crime springs. But even where there is well-nigh perfect love and compassion there is still no exemption from involvement in others' crimes. "We are all responsible to all for all," says the saintly Father Zossima—a dictum in dramatic contrast with Ivan's "all things are lawful." Indeed, according to Father Zossima, "There is only one means of salvation: . . . make yourself responsible for all men's sins. It is the truth, friends, for as soon as you make yourself sincerely responsible for every one and every thing, you will see at once that it is really so and you are in fact responsible for everything and every one. But throwing your

indolence and impotence on others you will end by sharing Satan's pride and complaining against God."¹⁰ Ivan's fault was just that: throwing his guilt on mankind in general; not taking mankind's guilt upon himself.

A consequence of Father Zossima's teaching that all are responsible to all for all is that one man may not judge another, for the judge may be as guilty as the criminal, even though the judge's lapse has simply been a failure to be "a light to evil-doers, even as the one man sinless."¹¹ The idea of the judge and the judged being equally criminal is expressed by Whitman in the line already quoted:

Who am I too that I am not on trial or in prison?

Dostoyevsky goes beyond Whitman in exploring the ways in which we each share in the world's guilt. For example, through society's indifference to, and humiliation of, certain of our fellow beings, we become responsible for the sins of these "injured and insulted." According to Dostoyevsky humiliation frequently (though not always) generates pride, which is the root of most crime. Thus in *Crime and Punishment* Raskolnikov, a university student humiliated by poverty and consequent helplessness to protect his mother and sister, develops an enormous pride. He feels he is a superman, exempt from the morality of the everyday world, who is destined to be of immense benefit to humanity. To prepare himself for this future role all he needs is money. To get this money he has only to murder and rob a pawnbroker, a parasite who has done nothing but harm to her fellow mortals. Thus in his pride Raskolnikov rationalizes himself into the commission of a crime the aftermath of which he is completely incapable of controlling. Yet those responsible for Raskolnikov's humiliating poverty—whether as members of society or as individuals—must bear part of his guilt.

Another case of destructive action rising from humiliation is that of Ilusha in *The Brothers Karamazov*. Dmitri has assaulted Ilusha's father and dragged him through the street by the beard. The boy has taken his father's humiliation to heart, especially since his schoolmates have taunted him with it. In an upsurge of pride Ilusha, after wounding one of the boys with a penknife, turns upon the whole group of hecklers, cursing and hurling stones at them. When Alyosha tries to rescue him from the uneven struggle and to calm him, the boy bites his finger to the bone. Similarly the hero of *Raw Youth*, when accused falsely of being a thief, tells how he experiences "a sudden flash of fearful anger. 'To clear my character is impossible,' floated through my mind, 'to begin a new life is impossible, too, and so I must submit, become a lackey, a dog, an insect, an informer, a real informer, while I secretly prepare myself, and one day suddenly blow it all up into the air, annihilate everything and every one, guilty and innocent alike, so that they will all know that this was the man they had all called a thief.'"¹²

Among many of Dostoyevsky's women characters humiliation is even more disruptive, though in a different manner. In *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dmitri offers Katerina Ivanovna, his colonel's daughter, 5000 roubles with which to save her father from an embezzling charge. In return she must yield her body to him. Katerina accepts the arrangement and keeps her appointment with Dmitri, who then magnanimously releases her from her payment. He, of course, appears noble, but she appears a bit shabby for ever having entered into such an agreement. By her sense of shame she is transformed into what Dostoyevsky called "an infernal woman," a common type in his books. In a frenzy of self-martyrdom she insists on marrying Dmitri, "to show her gratitude," though in reality she loathes him. Even when she falls in love with Ivan, she refuses to relinquish Dmitri, who would be glad to get rid of her. She ends by destroying both

men. Likewise in *The Gambler*, the heroine Polina has been rejected by a Frenchman who had once been her lover but has now dismissed her with a gift of 50,000 francs. She bitterly regrets having accepted the money, which makes a whore of her, and in her humiliation-engendered pride desires to raise a like sum "to throw in the Frenchman's face." The hero of the story, who is in love with her, would gladly give her the money, but in order to abase herself further she perversely insists on "selling herself" to him.

The masochistic relation between humiliation, pride, and crime, as an element in communal responsibility for the evil done in this world, does not enter into the speculations of Whitman, who was less of a psychologist than Dostoyevsky. In the treatment of sin and guilt there is a closer, and startling, resemblance between Hawthorne and Dostoyevsky. Like Dostoyevsky and Whitman, Hawthorne was well aware of the potential of evil in the soul of man. Indeed, in "Young Goodman Brown" the hero discovers in the Devil's mass his basic kinship with all mankind—a sacrilege to the other two authors, who emphasized goodness as man's natural state. In *The Blithedale Romance* appears an "infernal woman," Zenobia, who destroys herself and others through her immense pride. In "A Gentle Boy" Hawthorne again assesses the damage that humiliation and persecution can do in driving their victims to pride and consequent sinful action. This story contains two Dostoyevskyan types: the meek Ilbrahim, a Quaker boy who accepts persecution passively and forgivingly, and the boy's vengeful mother, Catharine, who, after the death of her husband at the hands of the Puritans, smothers her humanity in a flood of hate and masochism. "Wherever a scourge was lifted there was she to receive the blow; and whenever a dungeon was unbarred thither she came, to cast herself upon the floor."¹³ Catharine, like Katerina Ivanovna in *The Brothers Karamazov*, becomes dehumanized, the

victim of a pride-induced compulsion to hurt herself and her fellow humans. To the question, who is to blame in these situations, there is only one answer: everyone is to blame, the persecutor as well as the persecuted, the malefactor as well as those who set themselves up as judges.

To Dostoyevsky, Whitman, and Hawthorne, man would seem to be enmeshed in a hopeless tangle of guilt. But they believed the tangle may be unsnarled, though the process is painful and intricate. First, all must admit their "responsibility to all for all." Each must confess his general guilt and his own more specific wrongdoings. Further, this confession must be made in public, to all humanity, for all humanity is involved. Humbling one's self privately before God is not sufficient to eradicate pride, the chief source of sin. An inordinately proud character in *Raw Youth* is described as laying his heart bare to God but cringing from doing so to his fellow men. As a result he remains spiritually unchanged. In Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* this truth is beautifully pointed up in the contrasting lives of Hester Prynne and her partner in adultery, the Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale. Hester, by the very act of giving birth to an illegitimate child, is compelled to confess her guilt and for years she publicly wears the badge of it. Slowly she wins the respect of the townspeople and comes to enjoy peace of mind. Resentment at her humiliation melts into a quiet and selfless service to her fellows. But Dimmesdale carries his guilt in secret, admitting it only before God. His character and physical health deteriorate and he suffers the tortures of a self-made hell. Realizing that salvation lies only in public confession, he makes the futile gesture of announcing his sin in the town square at night when everyone is asleep. The ruse is of course futile. Only on his dying day, when he confesses to a multitude gathered to hear him deliver an election sermon, does he find peace.

The case of Arthur Dimmesdale is paralleled in *The Brothers*

Karamazov by the story of "The Mysterious Visitor," told by Father Zossima. The stranger is drawn to Father Zossima because of his reputation for holiness. He relates that fourteen years before, he had murdered a woman who had spurned his love. Since then he has been living in hell, but believes that if he confesses "he would heal his soul and be at peace forever." To Father Zossima he cries: "Decide my fate!" Father Zossima answers, "Go and confess," and taking up the New Testament he shows the stranger the verse, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."¹⁴ The stranger does confess, at his birthday party (for this will mark a rebirth), after a long struggle in which he stealthily returns to Father Zossima with the intention of murdering him but at the last minute decides against the crime. Though those who hear his confession consider him insane, he nevertheless attains peace and, for the first time since his childhood, perfect sanity. Shortly thereafter he dies.

Ivan and Dmitri, in *The Brothers Karamazov*, are contrasting studies of the place of confession in the journeying of the soul from selfish isolation into community with mankind. Dmitri in the first part of the book is preoccupied entirely with the gratification of his senses, to which end he appears ready to commit murder. In attempting to steal his father's money, he seriously wounds his old foster father, the faithful servant Grigory. With blood on his hands he rushes off to a wild orgy with Grushenka in a neighboring village. During the night he is arrested for the murder of his father, whom Smerdyakov had killed when Dmitri failed to do so. Dmitri is stripped of his clothing, mercilessly cross-examined, subjected to every humiliation by the investigating authorities. Yet humiliation does not intensify the egotism of Dmitri, as is more often the case with Dostoyevskian characters, but kills it. His ego has died and its

death is heralded by a dream which also heralds the rebirth of another Dmitri, a better one. This is the dream of the babe whose suffering he longs to relieve along with that of all mankind. Immediately after the dream, as he is loaded into the carriage for the return to town, Dmitri shouts his confession to the crowd gathered to see him off.

"Gentlemen, we're all cruel, we're all monsters. We all make men weep, and mothers and babes at the breast, but of all, let it be settled here, now, of all I am the lowest reptile. Every day of my life I've sworn to amend, beating my breast, and every day I've done the same filthy things. . . . Forgive me at parting, good people!"¹⁵

The reason that Dmitri's humiliation does not harden his selfhood into pride is that he has always been aware of his own unworthiness. "I am an insect," he has repeatedly announced to Alyosha. Also in his pursuit of beauty and joy, even of the Sodom variety, he has had a sense of his oneness with humanity. Finally, he has known love, particularly on that evening of his arrest, when Grushenka declared her love for him. Love tends to undermine selfishness. Thus the mauling of the police kills an ego that is already weakened.

But with Ivan, as we have seen, selfishness has been so entrenched with intellectual pride that it can't be put to flight. He too is appalled by the suffering of children, but in him the suffering results in rebellion, a desire to hand back God's ticket to life in His universe. Whereas Dmitri, like Whitman, reacts with love to the spectacle of suffering, Ivan reacts with anger. Ivan, in his pride, outlines in "The Grand Inquisitor" chapter a plan for revising the order of things—a plan which will capitalize on man's weaknesses rather than on his strengths; a plan stemming from contempt for man rather than from love of man. As for personal responsibility for the sin and suffering which he hopes to correct, Ivan feels none. When at last he realizes his

own guilt in his father's death, he determines to confess. For a moment, as we have seen, he is softened, for he aids the peasant whom he had previously knocked into the snow. When he makes his confession in court it is not a sincere one. In an outburst of hate he accuses all men of being patricidal. He places himself on their level perhaps, but that level he considers vastly lower than Dmitri or Dostoyevsky himself would consider it. What becomes of Ivan is left in doubt, probably purposely. He has thus far failed to make the first necessary step toward spiritual rebirth. His confession is an expression of wounded pride rather than humility.

Whitman's poems are, in a sense, one vast exposé (to use a favorite term of his) of the good and evil in his own character. But in the sense of confession of one's own sinfulness as a step toward spiritual health, Whitman is no more energetic than Dmitri. One of many such outbursts is "Confession and Warning," poem 42 in the 1860 edition of *Leaves of Grass*:

I go no farther till I confess myself in the open air, in the hearing of
this time and future times,
Also I make a leaf of fair warning.—
I am he who has been sly, thievish, mean, a prevaricator, greedy,
And I am he who remains so yet.—

Beneath this impassive face the hot fires of hell continuously burn—
within me the lurid smutch and smoke;
Not a crime can be named but I have it in me waiting to break forth,
Lusts and wickedness are acceptable to me,
I walk with delinquents with passionate love,
And I say I am of them—I belong to them myself,
And henceforth I will not deny them—for how can I deny myself?¹⁶

Crime results from pride, frequently humiliated pride, and pride is the exaltation of self. Thus the death of the self, and with it pride, is essential for the rebirth of the individual into

a harmonious life, that is, into *love*. The "corn of wheat" verse from St. John serves as text for this assumption. The criminal's glorification of his ego mounts to cutting himself off from humanity. By confession he takes the first step toward re-entering humanity. This is exactly Whitman's view. The self that Whitman celebrates is not the isolated self, but the common humanity shared by all men—the good and the evil latent in all human souls. Thus he refuses to place himself on a pinnacle by the pretension of being either uniquely good or uniquely evil. He shares good and evil alike with all men. Neither Dostoyevsky nor Whitman could stomach self-righteousness. Whitman's whole literary production has a tendency to deflate holier-than-thou smugness. Spiritually, he reiterated, we are all equals. That was the lesson taught by Christ during His stay on earth. In Dostoyevsky a striking instance of his contempt for self-righteousness is the treatment he gives Father Ferrapont, who has made a name for himself by his ferocious ascetism. He lives on only a few ounces of bread a day, spends whole days and nights on his knees, and mortifies his flesh by wearing chains under his cassock. So great is his pride that he seldom deigns to go to communion where he would have to rub elbows with less "holy" men. Similarly, in Hawthorne's "Lady Eleanore's Mantle" the Lady, while wrapped in her mantle of pride, refuses the Eucharistic cup which would have drawn her into the circle of common humanity.

Two types of character are constantly recurring in nineteenth-century fiction. They are the innocents like Huck Finn or Tolstoy's Levin (in *Anna Karenina*), who in their purity bungle through the world and gradually become initiates in its evil without ever succumbing to evil. The other is represented by many of Dostoyevsky's and Hawthorne's characters and by Whitman as he presents himself in his poems. These are not innocents. They bear the germs of evil within themselves; it is not society,

or the world, that contaminates them. In the evil of their environment they see mirrored their own sinfulness, and like Hester Prynne or Raskolnikov or Dmitri, or Whitman, they attain goodness only after sinning and publicly acknowledging their sinfulness. Even those who achieve the status of saints, like Father Zossima or the prostitute Sonya, have erred grievously before their spiritual regeneration. On the other hand, Levin and the boys in Mark Twain's books have never really transgressed. They are in a constant state of shock or bewilderment at the evil they see around them, without ever detecting the possibility of any similar evil within themselves, and this despite frequent and protracted soul-searchings. Such people are pleasant to think about, though they seem less real than the Dmitris and Whitmans. Dostoyevsky created only one such innocent, Prince Myshkin in *The Idiot*, whose immaculate goodness seemed somehow allied to his illness of epilepsy, which had to some extent impaired his brain. It is very significant that this perfectly pure character was compared to Don Quixote in that he was ineffectual in his sole object in life, that of helping others. Unlike Huck Finn or Levin, his innocence was a handicap and eventually destroyed not only him but all of those whom he had hoped to help. A knowledge and a personal experience of good and evil stemming from one's inner nature are necessary, Dostoyevsky and Whitman would say, not only for personal survival but also for usefulness to others.

IV

PENANCE AND FORGIVENESS

If you accept as normal life only what you can understand, then you will try only to expel the dull, dead weight of Destiny, of inevitable suffering which is a part of normal life, and never come to terms with it or fit your soul to the collar and bear the burden of *your* suffering which must be borne by you, or enter into the divine education and drastic discipline of sorrow, or rise radiant in the sacrament of pain.

THOMAS KELLY

Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Matthew 6:12

Suffering is necessary and inevitable, but man is created for joy. This paradox is perhaps the profoundest lesson coming from the life and works of Dostoyevsky and Whitman. And it is this paradox that testifies to their religious faith, for faith without paradox is unthinkable. "I believe because it is absurd." Dostoyevsky in Siberia and Whitman in the Civil War were in contact with man bestialized and man suffering, and both from these experiences developed a deepened hope for mankind and faith in the ultimate emergence of goodness. From great suffering both saw the ennoblement of man; without suffering both believed that spiritual and moral growth would rarely if ever occur, for suffering is one path toward the renunciation of self.

Further, suffering has a spiritualizing effect because through it we gain a heightened realization of life's chief end—joy. So necessary is pain to man that often, as Dostoyevsky points out in *Notes from Underground*, he will intentionally choose pain rather than pleasure. Finally, through sympathy with others' suffering man's most nearly divine emotions are brought into play—compassion and love. In *The Brothers Karamazov* Dostoyevsky works out the dialectic of pain in detail. The Grand Inquisitor's, or Ivan's, society in which pain is absent might be imposed on humanity; but once imposed, it would no longer be a society of men and women but of happy babes destined for eternal death. On the other hand, Father Zossima teaches that suffering is holy in its purpose and origin, and thus he bows down before the great potential of suffering that he sees in Dmitri. And to Ivan, before whom he might even more appropriately have bowed, he says, "Thank the creator who gave you a lofty heart capable of such suffering. . . ." ¹

Just before the scene with Dmitri and Ivan, Father Zossima has ministered to several peasant women who are believers. "There is a silent and long-suffering sorrow to be met with among the peasantry," Dostoyevsky says. "It withdraws into itself and is still. But there is a grief that breaks out, and from that minute it bursts into tears and finds vent in wailing. This is particularly common with women. But it is no lighter a grief than the silent. Lamentations comfort only by embittering and lacerating the heart still more. Such grief does not desire consolation. It feeds on the sense of its hopelessness."² Thus when Father Zossima speaks to a peasant woman who has lost her child, he admonishes her: "Be not comforted. You do not need to be comforted. Weep and be not consoled. Only every time that you weep be sure to remember that your little son is one of the angels of God, that he looks down from there at you and sees you and rejoices at your tears, and points at them to the Lord God. And

a long while yet you will keep that great mother's grief. But it will turn in the end into quiet joy, and your bitter tears will be only tears of quiet tenderness that purifies the heart and delivers it from sin."³

From great grief eventually will rise "quiet joy," real and durable joy, not untried by sorrow, in accord with the words of Jesus: "Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted." Dostoyevsky turns to the simplest people, the peasants, to illustrate this truth, because it is a very simple truth and one that needs no belaboring. Whitman similarly seeks among the common people for examples of basic emotions and psychological truths. In one of his most poignant poems, "Come Up from the Fields, Father," he describes how news of a son's death in the War arrives at an Ohio farm. It is probably just such a letter as Whitman himself wrote home for many a dying soldier. "I thought perhaps a few words," he once wrote to a bereaved parent, "though from a stranger, about your son, from one who was with him at the last, might be worth while—for I loved the young man, though I but saw him immediately to lose him." Absent is the conventional exhortation not to grieve, the mawkish attempt at consolation. The poem "Come Up from the Fields, Father" is identical in tone. It makes no attempt to comfort the reader and has no clichés for the mother. Her grief is like that of Zossima's peasant woman, and this is best for her—

She with thin form presently drest in black,
By day her meals untouch'd, then at night fitfully sleeping, often
waking,
In the midnight waking, weeping, longing with one deep longing,
O that she might withdraw unnoticed, silent from life escape and
withdraw....⁴

Whitman, no less than Dostoyevsky, insists that out of grief joy will eventuate. In his elegy on Lincoln, "When Lilacs Last

in the Dooryard Bloom'd," Whitman, chanting the grief of the whole nation, sings his "carol with joy, with joy to thee O death." But the grief remains, inevitable, the essential substratum of joy.

I saw the battle corpses, myriads of them,
And the white skeletons of young men, I saw them,
I saw the debris and the debris of all the slain soldiers of the war,
But I saw they were not as was thought.
They themselves were fully at rest, they suffer'd not,
The living remain'd and suffer'd, the mothers suffer'd,
And the wife and child and the musing comrade suffer'd,
The armies that remain'd suffer'd.⁵

Thus to Whitman and Dostoyevsky suffering, even of the apparently undeserving, is spiritually healthy for the sufferer. To neither author is there any wholly undeserved suffering for there are no wholly innocent people. Each of us shares in the world's guilt and each must share in its pain. It is for the purification of the criminal in all of us that suffering is ordained. Whitman in case after case, among soldiers of all degrees of goodness and badness, saw as an almost ineluctable law an ennoblement of spirit as suffering increased and death approached. "I never knew what American young men were till I came into the hospital,"⁶ he wrote to his mother—which would seem to say that their full spiritual stature was attained only in their death throes. Nor did he ever attend a soldier who feared death when the time came. Yet these are the same soldiers who perpetrated the bestialities of "war's hell scenes," North and South, and Whitman had no illusions about their innocence. "The war was not a quadrille in a ball room. . . . The actual soldier with all his ways . . . his incredible dauntlessness, habits, practices, tastes, language, his fierce friendship, his appetites, rankness, his superb strength and animality, lawless gait, and a hundred un-

named lights and shades of camp, I say, will never be written—perhaps must not and should not be.”⁷

Dostoyevsky develops in more detail than does Whitman his concept of the role of suffering in the transformation of human character. Hawthorne’s psychology of suffering, however, is quite comparable to that of Dostoyevsky. Hester Prynne attains spiritual maturity only after years of public penance. As was the case with Dmitri, the death of her ego signaled the birth of love in her soul, and in her last days she was something of a saint. Dimmesdale’s suffering, too, brings him eventual greatness of soul, but only at the hour of his death. Hawthorne’s view is that of Dostoyevsky: punishment is as “essential to the soul of the criminal . . . as its salvation from despair.”⁸ Thus in *The Brothers Karamazov* Dmitri hungers for punishment after the upsurge of love from his subconscious—after the death of the self and his rebirth into humanity as heralded by his public confession. He will go to the mines, as we have seen, and sing hymns of joy deep underground. “We shall be in chains and there will be no freedom, but then in our great sorrow we shall rise again to joy.” This craving for punishment is not a selfish one. Dmitri is undergoing it for “the babe” that he has seen in his dream. “All are responsible for all. . . . [I go to Siberia] for all the ‘babes,’ for there are big children as well as little children. All are ‘babes.’ I go for all because some one must go for all.”⁹ The implication is that “atonement” for the common sin of humanity is an impulse in all of us.

Dmitri’s eagerness to be punished for his individual sin as well as those of all society is incomprehensible to the modernists in *The Brothers Karamazov*. There is much speculation as to whether Dmitri’s crime of patricide, which everyone but Alyosha thought he had committed, is the result of mental aberration, and an eminent physician is summoned from Moscow to prove Dmitri’s insanity. Some, such as the journalist Rakitin,

who bends like a willow before every wind of doctrine (the name is from *rakita*, a willow), hold that Dmitri is the victim of sociological forces. Rakitin uses the Karamazov affair for articles on the unhealthy tendencies in Russian society and hints that socialism is the cure. But Dmitri rejects both these approaches, the sociological as well as the psychiatric. He will not allow himself to be regarded as a machine possessing no knowledge of good and evil and no control over its actions. His "would-be saviours" wish to strip him of his humanity, of his soul, all for the purpose of preserving his body from suffering. To these people he shouts the name Bernard—the French physician who believed all human conduct could be explained and forecast by physiology and who, as one of the most influential of the new scientific determinists of the nineteenth century, was a strong influence on Zola, the foremost literary exponent of individual irresponsibility.

To Dostoyevsky a terrible inconsistency was developing in Western Europe between modern criminology and the traditional systems of justice. On the one hand the most advanced thinkers were proclaiming that there was no crime. Man's actions were the result of social and biological factors outside of the will. On the other hand criminals were sent to prison just as always. These unfortunates, then, were doing penance for actions for which, they were assured, they were not to blame. The inevitable result was bitterness and despair. Punishment, to Dostoyevsky, can be beneficial only when the sufferer feels it is deserved and when he feels he is being *forgiven* for his wrongdoing.

Forgiveness, "the intelligence of the heart,"¹⁰ as Dostoyevsky calls it, is therefore the last step in the absolution and regeneration of the human soul. Father Zossima thought that in Russia forgiveness was the special duty of the church which, "like a tender, loving mother, holds aloof from active punishment her-

self, as the sinner is already too severely punished by the civil court, and there must at least be some one to have pity on him."¹¹ Should the church join in the punishment, "there could be no more horrible despair, at least for the Russian criminal." Christ for Dostoyevsky, as for Whitman, is the consoler, not the avenger; the acceptor, not the rejecter.

"Compassion is the chief law of human existence,"¹² says Dostoyevsky in *The Idiot*, and J. C. Powys asserts that in the Russian soul "ecstatic pity" occupies the same place as romantic love in the Western soul. Be that as it may, compassion, not romantic love, was a chief law of Whitman's heart also. Compassion, which must antecede forgiveness, may be defined as the giving and receiving of love to and from all human beings, no matter who they may be. Whitman's compassion, in this sense of the word, for all down-and-outers and criminals is, of course, a basic theme of his writings.

. . . I pick out some low person for my dearest friend.
 He shall be lawless, rude, illiterate, he shall be one condemn'd by
 others for deeds done,
 I will play a part no longer, why should I exile myself from my com-
 panions?
 O you shunned persons, I at least do not shun you,
 I come forthwith in your midst, I will be your poet,
 I will be more to you than to any of the rest.¹³

Many of Dostoyevsky's characters are possessed of great compassion. Such are Alyosha, Father Zossima, and Sonya, but leader of them all in compassion is Prince Myshkin in *The Idiot*. The Prince has been thrown into the company of psychotics and criminals. Out of pity he offers to marry the beautiful but fantastically erratic Nastasia Philipovna, whose life has been a prolonged self-laceration stemming from her girlhood humiliation by an older nobleman who took her as his mistress. The homi-

cidal Rogozhin, whose blazing eyes are those of a madman, also wishes to marry Nastasia, and it is to rescue her from that fate that Myshkin proposes marriage to her and is accepted. The jealous Rogozhin exchanges crosses with the Prince, but later attempts to murder him. On the day of the wedding, Nastasia, as she emerges from her house, sees Rogozhin's gleaming eyes in the crowd on the sidewalk and rushes off with him. The Prince traces the pair to Petersburg and eventually to Rogozhin's massive and gloomy house. Rogozhin admits him and takes him to Nastasia, who is lying on a bed, stabbed to death by Rogozhin, and surrounded by jars of disinfectant to cover the smell of decomposition. Rogozhin is raving mad. He suggests that he and the Prince spend the night together. "Rogozhin began to wander—muttering disconnectedly: then he took to shouting and laughing. The Prince stretched out a trembling hand and gently stroked his hair and his cheeks—he could do nothing more. . . . Meanwhile the daylight grew full and strong; and at last the Prince lay down, as though overcome by despair, and laid his face against the white motionless face of Rogozhin. His tears flowed onto Rogozhin's cheeks, though he was perhaps not aware of it himself."¹⁴ Myshkin's compassion is so intense that he cannot endure the suffering of his "enemy." As Rogozhin goes into brain fever, the Prince lapses back into "idiocy." But this outcome in no way neutralizes the benign effects of forgiveness. Nothing can correct certain situations, and certain persons are beyond redemption; Rogozhin is one of these. His crime can only be atoned for by the prince's forgiveness and sacrifice of his own reason. That this may, and does, happen is proved by the effect of this scene on the reader. Rather than being struck with revulsion at Rogozhin's mad crimes, the reader is left with a sense of ennoblement of the human spirit. The monstrousness of Rogozhin's acts are negated by the beauty of the Prince's compassion.

Forgiveness is the only effective means of dealing with crime, says Dostoyevsky in commenting on Anna Karenina in his *Diary of a Writer*. In Tolstoy's novel, he finds "an immense psychological analysis of the human soul hitherto unknown in Russia." The scene in which Anna, almost dead from the birth of Vronsky's son, is forgiven by her husband is indeed as powerful a demonstration of the redemptive power of forgiveness as any from Dostoyevsky's own pen. In it is made

clear and intelligible to the point of obviousness that evil is concealed deeper in mankind than the physician-socialists suppose . . . that the laws of the human spirit are so unknown to science . . . that there can neither be physicians nor final judges but that there is only He who saith "Vengeance is mine, I will repay." . . . And man, as yet, with the pride of infallibility, should not venture to solve anything. . . . The human judge himself must know that he is not the final judge; that he himself is a sinner; that in his hands scales and measures will be an absurdity, if holding the scales and measures he fails to submit to the law of insoluble mystery and to resort to the only solution—to Mercy and Love . . . [by which in Anna's near death] criminals and enemies are suddenly transformed into brothers, who have forgiven each other everything; beings who by mutual all-forgiveness, have removed from themselves deceit, guilt and crime, and thereby at once acquitted themselves with full cognizance of the fact that they have become entitled to acquittal."¹⁵

This mistrust of merely rational, sociological attempts—like those of "the physician socialists"—to deal with human guilt and sin is shared by Whitman. "The origin of evil," he writes, "is a question that has puzzled all developed thoughtful minds through all the ages, and it is so dark and deep and mystic a problem that not the wisest of them has ever been able to peer behind one fold of the thick veil. And you [reformers] approach this mighty mystery and hold forth in your puny hands your potent 'specific' for its cure."¹⁶ The only specific against evil, to

Whitman, is that proposed by Dostoyevsky: confession, penance, forgiveness.

Whitman in *Democratic Vistas* asserts that the reason Christ appeared "in the moral-spiritual field for human-kind" was to demonstrate "that in respect to the absolute soul, there is in the possession of such by each individual, something so transcendent, so incapable of gradation (like life) that, to that extent, it places all beings on a common level, utterly regardless of the distinctions of intellect, virtue, station or any height or lowliness whatever."¹⁷ Christ, for both Whitman and Dostoyevsky, exists within the human soul, though for Whitman Christ is less exclusively divine than for Dostoyevsky. To each the Christ within us is that residue of the good and the beautiful—and hence of love and the divine—that rests at the center of all our souls, no matter how deeply encrusted they may be by evil and ugliness. In different words, it is the ideal of the Madonna, which Dmitri Karamazov sees existing in men's hearts side by side with the ideal of Sodom. Release of this potential of love—for that is what it is—makes for a joyous life. But to the degree that it is imprisoned within walls of evil, the personality is unhappy, neurotic, warped. The id, as we have said before, need not always be evil or purely animal. It contains much of good, of beauty, of love, also; perhaps in the profoundly criminal personality this is almost entirely submerged, as in Stavrogin with his enormous capability for crime. In others, the saints, in Jesus totally, the love is unhampered; and as God is love, Jesus is God, the omniscient, all-powerful, all-encompassing divine love. Orthodox Christianity, which Dostoyevsky so fervently supported, strives to release love in man, to nurture the Christ within him through its teaching and the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, which feeds the God within. "I assert," writes Dostoyevsky, "that our people have long been enlightened, having embraced in their hearts Christ and His teachings. . . . The

people acquired this knowledge in churches where, for centuries, they have been listening to prayers and hymns which are better than sermons."¹⁸ But less formal or traditional religion may have the same end, as Whitman's assuredly did. "I claim everything for religion,"¹⁹ he said. And these claims of his religion may be reduced to one claim, which is that of St. John: "He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is Love. . . If we love one another, God dwelleth in us." (I John 4:8-12) The release of love within the individual, indeed, is the goal of all Judaeo-Christianity, and the validity of this goal is recognized by secular science. Psychiatrists and priests alike know, in our day, that only through love can man or woman realize to the full the human destiny, which is joy. Psychology and religion, whether one believes in the "truth" of one or the other, or of both, are here on common ground.

Dostoyevsky's novels and Whitman's poetry and prose, and indeed his life itself, have in common something so fundamentally important that in comparison all differences fade into insignificance. Both are records of the repeated release, into seemingly hopeless situations, of a cleansing and redemptive love. But the situations in which these releases occur are the commonplace, the fundamental ones, which have been rendered hopeless solely because of the aura of hate that surrounds them. They may occur at a deathbed, as in Whitman's Civil War poems and memoirs, or at the bedside of the dying Ilusha in *The Brothers Karamazov*. They may occur at a birth, as in the magnificent blooming of love in Shatov's character, in *The Possessed*, when his wife bears a child conceived by another man, and Shatov's response, far from anger, is a paean of love for all life. They may occur, as so frequently in Dostoyevsky, at a simple gathering of friends—a dinner, a birthday party, a tête-à-tête like Alyosha's and Ivan's at the tavern, when they cement their love for one another during a discussion of the relations of God

and man and the meaning of life. They may occur in work and play with simple humble people, as in Whitman's companionship with ferry-boat pilots and omnibus drivers or Dostoyevsky's relations with certain of the convicts in Siberia.

Remarkable parallels, of course, may be made with other authors, such as Dickens, where the basic human situations are the settings for spiritual metamorphoses. In Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, at the death of Levin's brother Nicholas, the hitherto rather childish Kitty is changed into a loving and efficient nurse to the sufferer. The release of love here is entirely impersonal—*agape* of the Good Samaritan type. It is a manifestation of spiritual maturity. Finally, in *Anna Karenina* Levin's experiences of comradeship with the peasants as he mows hay with them are analogous to Whitman's outbursts of love for the common people, soldiers and civilians.

As regards the fundamentals of man's spiritual life. Dostoyevsky and Whitman were in close agreement. Too much may be made of Dostoyevsky's Orthodoxy as a possible point of disagreement. True, Whitman feared and scorned most religious organizations and presumably would not have been an admirer of the highly organized Eastern Church. Yet Whitman speaks of Christianity, in its essence, as "incomparably superior to all other religions," and believed the birth of Jesus "vitally started manifold seeds of true good which had for ages lain dormant in humanity."²⁰ These are thoughts with which Dostoyevsky would have heartily concurred. As a matter of fact, he speaks little, if at all, of the ritualistic, dogmatic side of Orthodoxy. He believes that better than any other sect it has preserved Christ in the heart of its people, but he attributes this success to the spirit of Orthodoxy rather than to its liturgy. Indeed, in a number of respects he deviates from strictest Orthodox doctrine. Father Zossima, who certainly represents the best of Orthodoxy to Dostoyevsky, differs from the teachings of the church in several ways: he

doesn't believe in a material hell, he advocates public confession, he prays for suicides, and he asks forgiveness of plants and birds. Thus such rigid believers as the self-righteous Father Ferrapont strongly disapprove of the elder.

The spirit of Christianity is always more important to Dostoyevsky than its forms, as is seen in his story "Dream of a Ridiculous Man," in which is described a Utopia where peace and love, joy and beauty prevail without exception. The religion of these happy people in no way resembles, in form, any Orthodoxy, Russian or otherwise. In fact it sounds much more like Whitman's religion than Dostoyevsky's. "They had no places of worship, but they had a certain awareness of a constant, uninterrupted and living union with the universe at large. They had no specific religion, but instead they had a certain knowledge that when their earthly joy had reached the limits imposed on it by nature, they—both the living and the dead—would reach a state of still closer communion with the Universe at large."²¹

Although Dostoyevsky asserts that there is no church, no Christianity in the West, still one may find there "many Christians who will never disappear."²² One of these is Dickens, whom he calls a "great Christian." Another is George Sand, who

died a *déiste*, with a staunch belief in God and in her immortal life. . . . In addition she was perhaps the most Christian among all persons of her age—French writers—even though she did not confess Christ (as does a Roman Catholic). Of course, being a Frenchwoman, in accord with the conception of her compatriots, George Sand could not consciously adhere to the idea "that in the whole universe there is no name other than His through which one may be saved"—the fundamental idea of Orthodoxy—yet despite this seeming and formal contradiction, George Sand, I repeat, was perhaps, without knowing it herself, one of the staunchest confessors of Christ. She based her socialism [which was anathema to Dostoyevsky], her convictions, her hopes and her ideals upon the moral feel-

ing of man, upon the spiritual thirst of mankind and its longing for perfection and purity, and not upon "ant-necessity." All her life she believed absolutely in human personality (to the point of its immortality) . . . and thereby she concurred in thought and feeling with one of the basic ideas of Christianity, *i.e.*, the recognition of human personality and its freedom. . . . And, perhaps, in the France of her time there was no thinker and no writer who understood so clearly as she that "man shall not live by bread alone." . . . and on more than one occasion she has portrayed characters of the most sincere forgiveness and love.²³

This passage, which should help to correct the widespread misunderstanding that Dostoyevsky was a thorough bigot, states a viewpoint very close to that of Whitman, who always claimed to be in accord with the teachings of Jesus, though he rejected most of the churches that taught in His name. The enthusiasm of Dostoyevsky for George Sand would have delighted Whitman, whose favorite novelist she was. There are many parallels between the thought of George Sand on the one hand and that of Dostoyevsky and Whitman on the other. But more significant than the possible common source of some of their ideas is the fact that they *are* parallel in so many instances. Perhaps Dostoyevsky and Whitman would have despised one another, but more likely they would have found much to admire. Be that as it may, they were exploring the same depths and peaks of the spiritual life of the same human race, and were making many of the same discoveries, or rediscoveries—some of which may be of the utmost importance in the future of man.

V

LOVE

And there is no other love than this, that a man should lay down his life for his friend. Love is only when it is the sacrifice of one's self. Only when a man gives to another, not merely his time and his strength, but when he spends his body for the beloved object, gives up his life for him,—only this do we acknowledge as love; and only in such love do we find happiness, the reward of love. And only in virtue of the fact that there is such love towards men, only in this, does the world stand.

LYOF TOLSTOY

Man's destiny is to find joy through love; and love, we have seen, is released through confession, penance or suffering, and forgiveness. Both Whitman and Dostoyevsky understood love in its Christian sense, that is, as brotherly love, or *agape* or charity. This type of love Whitman sometimes called adhesiveness, love of comrades and friends. For sexual love he used another phrenological term, amateness.

Erich Fromm writes, "Sexual desire can often blend with and be stimulated by any strong emotion, of which love is only one."¹ To Dmitri in *The Brothers Karamazov*, "Being in love doesn't mean loving. You may be in love with a woman and yet hate her."² It is possible to love, in the passionate sense, at the same

time that one hates, as is the case with so many Dostoyevskian "lovers." Katya Ivanovna hates Dmitri because he has humiliated her but loves him out of gratitude. Her gratitude she believes should express itself in giving herself in marriage, but her hate determines her to "reform" him after the marriage takes place. Eventually, as we have seen, she destroys both Dmitri and Ivan, the man she unreservedly loves. Also in *The Brothers Karamazov*, Lise, who vents her masochism in the act of intentionally slamming her finger in a door—for "kicks," in modern parlance—attempts to establish a liaison with Ivan, with whom, in the morbid state of her mind, she sees a further opportunity of torturing herself. She shies away from Alyosha's love, though she has encouraged it, because he will give her nothing but tenderness. In *The Idiot* Nastasia Philipovna both loves and hates Rogozhin, who in turn both loves and hates her and eventually murders her. In stories like "A Gentle Spirit" or *Notes from Underground*, neurotics with a sadistic bent have sexual affairs with, or marry, passive women whom they delight in subjecting to mental torture and humiliation. Thus the hero of *Notes from Underground* accepts the love of a mere pitiable child of a prostitute, assures her of his love for her, and receives her at his home only to insult her by offering her money in return for her coming. In short, persons totally incapable of selfless love may enter with gusto into sexual affairs as outlets for every conceivable normal or abnormal impulse. The result is what Dostoyevsky calls "those outbursts of sensuality which overtake almost everybody on our earth, whether man or woman, and are the only source of almost every sin of our human race."³

Dostoyevsky did not, of course, rule out genuine love between man and woman. Yet where such love does exist the sexual element is usually minimized. Sonya and Raskolnikov love one another but not "passionately." Myshkin and Nastasia (so far as she reciprocates) love one another as brother and sister. But

these cases are relatively rare in Dostoyevsky. Much more consistently does he underscore the destructiveness of sexuality.

This idea of the destructiveness of sex is not, of course, a new one. In fact, the notion that sexual love is conducive only to bliss is quite exceptional and recent in human history. Aphrodite, to the Greeks, was a cruel, vindictive goddess, as was her son Eros. One need read only the account of the love of Dido and Aeneas to realize what the ancients felt about sexual passion. Not only does Dido kill herself as a result of her passion, but the whole course of human history would have been radically changed by it had not a stronger and worthier love, that of Duty, overcome Aeneas's lust for Dido and sent him on to found the Roman Empire. Similarly in many of the Greek tragedies and in Ovid, sexual desire is a wrecker and destroyer. The gods themselves are not exempt from its ravages.

The destructiveness of sex is a theme in many Russian novels of the nineteenth century. Anna Karenina is destroyed by her passion for Vronsky. In Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons* the would-be superman, Bazarov, succumbs to an infatuation which he tries to beat down but which ends by wrecking a career that he had hoped to devote to the betterment of mankind. Some critics, like the philosopher-theologian Berdyaev, attribute the unromantic treatment of love in Russian literature, especially in Dostoyevsky, to the fact that the medieval cult of Courtly Love, the "platonic" worship of womanhood, did not penetrate into Russia from Western Europe. The knightly ideals of chastity and idealization of women supposedly did much to soften the harshness of sexual attraction in the West, but Russia retained the classic dualistic idea of Eros as being sweet and ruthless at the same time.

Also, Dostoyevsky's experience with women did much to remove in his outlook the romance of sexual love. Of his love for the woman who was to be his first wife he wrote a friend, "I

am an unhappy madman. Such love is a disease.”⁴ The woman did indeed seem to enjoy torturing him, apparently loving him and scorning him at the same time, as so many of Dostoyevsky’s heroines do their lovers and suitors. For a period in their courtship she was having an affair with an impoverished schoolteacher but yet would not release her hold on Dostoyevsky. The two rivals were friendly, Dostoyevsky putting himself out to be gracious. Eventually the marriage took place, but it was never a happy one. More disruptive in Dostoyevsky’s life was his extramarital affair with Appolinaria Suslova, a young girl of twenty (half Dostoyevsky’s age) who had come into his life as a contributor to a magazine he was editing. A most ardent liaison resulted. The two finally arranged a rendezvous in Paris, but when Dostoyevsky arrived there, leaving a sick wife, Polina had become the mistress of a Spanish medical student. Dostoyevsky was in despair, but soon the Spaniard threw over Polina. She and Dostoyevsky then determined to take a trip as brother and sister through Switzerland and Italy, pawning their possessions as they went. The trip was a prolonged torture for Dostoyevsky, who had come face to face in Polina with the infernal woman who was to people many of his later novels. Under the stress of the affair, he became prey to the gambling monomania which proved as great an agony as his love affair or his epilepsy. Only in the last ten years of his life, when he was married to the meek Anna Snitkin, his former secretary, did he find in his relation with a woman a love that brought him peace and not agony. Anna Snitkin’s love, like that of Sonya for Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment*, was compassionate and motherly and did not stem solely from sexual desire.

The vast chasm between love as sexual passion and love as *agape* or *caritas* is as deep and seemingly unbridgeable in Whitman’s writing as in that of Dostoyevsky. It has often been said that Whitman presents heterosexual love with about as little

aura of romance as one would describe the coitus of animals. Even his somewhat enthusiastic references to "well-mated" husbands and wives emphasize the physical side of love between the sexes. The physical indeed is the whole burden of "Children of Adam," that section of *Leaves of Grass* that celebrates procreation. With a frankness and an ardor unknown in the literature of the century, Whitman sings the delights of "the body electric," both male and female, and goes into transports over the supposed mystic significance of the sexual act. Yet in these spasms of verbal masturbation there is nothing more spiritual, or "romantic," or tender, than there is in the coming together of a stallion and mare.

Limitless limpid jets of love hot and enormous, quivering jelly of
love, white blow and delirious juice,
Bridegroom night of love working surely and softly into the prostrate dawn,
Undulating into the willing and yielding day,
Lost in the cleave of the clasping and sweet-flesh'd day.⁵

This outbreak, which is a fair specimen of what Whitman could write on the subject of copulation, is surprising from the pen of a man who, we are almost universally assured, was a homosexual. But more important, and perhaps because of his presumed homosexuality, such passages belong to the erotic rather than the romantic tradition of love poetry. One would have to look far in world literature to find passages so crassly sensual. The only significance Whitman permits himself to see in the orgasms he describes in such detail is the admittedly important one that they supply the need for "superb children." But these children seem to be born of lust to the exclusion of love. Further, the libidinous joys that Whitman records are mixed with pain of equal intensity, exactly as are the sexual yearnings of Dostoevsky's Rogozhins and Dmitris, though scenes of consummation

like those in Whitman are lacking in the more reticent Dostoyevsky. Lines like the following, selected at random from "Children of Adam," do not suggest the blissful selflessness of spiritualized love.

One hour to madness and joy! O furious! O confine me not!

(What is this that frees me so in storms?

What do my shouts amid lightnings and raging winds mean?)

O to drink the mystic deliria deeper than any other man!

O savage and tender achings!⁶

O hymen! O hymeneel why do you tantalize me thus?

O why sting me for a swift moment only?⁷

I am he that aches with amorous love.⁸

These "children of Adam" poems have a vocabulary heavily weighted toward pain: tantalize, sting, ache, madness, furious, savage. Surely such words have little relation to the love whose perfect type was incarnated in Galilee two thousand years ago. Whitman's sexual poems describe a love that is potentially a destroyer of the peace of the soul, a ravager of the emotions, like the sexual love in Dostoyevsky's work and in so many of the ancients.

The equating of love and sex—as evidenced in the naive belief among so many moderns that a careful study of a handbook will ensure a happy marriage—is becoming recognized as one of the great contemporary errors. In sensing that love and sex may as often as not be antagonists rather than allies, Whitman and Dostoyevsky were ahead of or at variance with their age. Perhaps it is one of the great achievements of love that it has in some measure subdued the destructive blaze of sex, though it has by no means extinguished it. Perhaps it is part of the "real-

ism," the insight, of Dostoyevsky and Whitman that they refuse to equate two forces which, at times at least, are so completely at odds. At any rate, in this view Dostoyevsky and Whitman are in accord with the Christian tradition, whose Founder was born without benefit of the biological act of copulation. The high opinion that Dostoyevsky, in *The Brothers Karamazov*, holds of the monastic life and the relative sexlessness of his meek heroes and heroines and Whitman's emphasis on the brotherly love of comrades all reflect the Christian, especially the Pauline, evaluation of sex as inimical to the spiritual life in its fullest manifestation.

But neither Dostoyevsky nor Whitman went to the extreme of Tolstoy in his later years, who regarded all sexual passion, within or outside of marriage, as degrading and injurious, and who in his *Kreutzer Sonata*, a novel of murder induced by sexual jealousy, wrote one of the most violent attacks on sexual love and marriage since the Middle Ages. Unlike either Dostoyevsky and Whitman, Tolstoy would follow the Shakers in eradicating sexual intercourse entirely, even at the cost of the survival of the human race.

In *Anna Karenina* Tolstoy shows step by step how in the unconscious mind the desire for death and the desire for sexual passion grow simultaneously and are in reality two expressions of one and the same force. The birth of this love-death wish is portrayed with stunning impact in the scene in the railway carriage as Anna returns to Petersburg after her first meeting with her lover, Count Vronsky. Filled with misgivings as to her feelings, as a married woman, for Vronsky, she drops into a half-sleep. "Moments of doubt were continuously coming upon her when she was uncertain whether the train were going forwards or backwards or was standing still altogether; whether it were Annushka at her side or another. 'What's that on the arm of the

chair, a fur cloak or some beast? And what am I myself? Myself or some other woman?' She was afraid of giving way to this delirium. *But something drew her towards it, and she could yield to it or resist it at will.*" [Italics mine.] When a peasant comes in to stoke the stove she arouses herself briefly. Then she lapses into full nightmare. "That peasant with the long waist seemed to be gnawing at something on the wall, the old lady began stretching her legs the whole length of the carriage, and filling it with a black cloud. Then there was a fearful shrieking and banging, as though some one were being torn to pieces; then there was a blinding dazzle of red fire before her eyes and a wall seemed to rise up and hide everything. Anna felt as though she were sinking down. *But it was not terrible but delightful.*"⁹ [Italics mine.] This is a dream, of course, of her own self-inflicted death, which at the end of the book is described in almost the same words. The desire for death, even the form she would will it to take, was conceived in her subconscious mind at the same time that she yielded, again in the subconscious, to Vronsky, whom she meets at the next station on the blizzard-swept platform, where he declares his love for her. The story of her love is the story of her journey toward suicide—both of which she could resist or not at will.

This same love-death syndrome is developed in very similar fashion in Thomas Mann's "Death in Venice" and his *The Magic Mountain*. In *The Magic Mountain* Hans Castorp, suffering from boredom quite like Anna's, is fascinated by the manifestations of death at the Swiss health resort he is visiting. He dreams of death—of coasting downhill on a bobsled like those employed to remove corpses from some of the remoter sanatoria. At the same time he becomes enamored of a married woman, pretty, though a sloven both morally and physically. As his relation with her builds up toward bodily union, he realizes

that his interest in death and his feelings for her are one and the same. And yet he plunges downwards into the abyss. Only when brought face to face with death by freezing is he saved, like Dmitri, by a dream of the beauty and agony of humanity, which marks the upsurge of unselfish, thus healthy love, from his unconscious. Thomas Mann always admitted his debt to Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky, and nowhere is this debt more evident than in his treatment of the libido, which, amazingly, so often fails to differentiate between lust for copulation and lust for death.

What is spiritual love, *agape*, as found in Dostoyevsky's and Whitman's writings? It is selflessness, which sensual love cannot be; and it is compassion. But it is more. It is a positive force, discrete from all other forces, latent within the emotions of all men. We have seen that Father Zossima regards love as that which generates joy and faith in immortality and God. Love is God. "However religious a man may be," writes a present-day author, "however correct his beliefs and punctilious his ritual observances, unless he loves he does not know God."¹⁰ Love to the medieval mind was that which establishes harmony among all mankind and in all nature. It establishes civil order and governments and regulates the tides, the seasons, the movements of the sun, moon, and stars. Love is what creates order out of chaos. Love again by this definition is God. This "bond of love," as it is called in Chaucer and elsewhere, is what Whitman celebrates in one of his most lyrical mystical passages:

Swiftly arose and spread around me the peace and knowledge that
pass all arguments of the earth,
And I know the hand of God is the promise of my own,
And I know the spirit of God is the brother of my own,
And that all men ever born are also my brothers and the women my
sisters and lovers,
And that a kelson of the creation is love,

And limitless are leaves stiff or drooping in the fields,
And brown ants in the little wells beneath them,
And mossy scales of the worm fence, heap'd stones, elder, mullein
and poke-weed.¹¹

Close in feeling—for these mystical transports transcend thought and are entirely in the realm of feeling or intuition—is Father Zossima's exhortation: "Love all God's creation, the whole and every grain of sand in it. Love every leaf, every ray of God's light. Love the animals, love the plants, love everything. If you love everything you will perceive the divine mystery in things. Once you perceive it you will begin to comprehend it better every day. And you will come at last to love the whole with an all-embracing love. . . . My young brother asked the birds to forgive him; that sounds senseless, but it is right, for all is like an ocean, all is flowing and blending; a touch in one place sends up a movement at the other end of the earth."¹²

This love that binds all men and things together is what Whitman calls adhesiveness—"the love of comrades," as distinct from amateness, which is love in the sense of sexual attraction. In celebration of adhesive love he wrote the "Calamus" section of *Leaves of Grass*, which is the counterpart of the amative "Children of Adam." The name "Calamus" is that of a perennial marsh plant that sends up its leaves, or flags, in fascicles. The symbolism is intricate, but one must understand it in order fully to comprehend Whitman's notion of love. The symbolism is explained in the poem "Scented Herbage of My Breast." To begin with, Whitman equates love and death: "Folded inseparably together, you love and death are." But it is not death as annihilation, which is the aspect of death that Tolstoy and Mann associate with sexual love. In a previous line Whitman has said that the faint-tinged roots of the calamus make him think of death. But the roots are perennial, a symbol of immortality. Out

of these roots, over and over again, as the reasons roll by, spring the leaves in their fascicles symbolic of the close bond between comrades. Whitman says,

Indeed O death, I think now these leaves mean precisely the same as you mean.¹³

The leaves, that is, die away; but the source, the pink-tinged perennial roots from which they spring, is eternal. Adhesive love similarly springs from eternity, from immortality; love is eternal, immortal, though individuals may die. For Whitman, just as for Father Zossima, the assurance of immortality rests in love ("as you advance in love, you will grow surer of the reality of God and of the immortality of your soul"¹⁴). To Whitman death is the evacuation of the "excrementitious body;" death is a release of the soul into immortality. It is with death in this sense that Whitman sees love folded inseparably together, for death is merely the return of the soul to its source, pure love or God. Whitman can, therefore, assure us he will "make death exhilarating."

This is Whitman's purpose in all his great poems on love and death. In "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" the mournful song of the bereaved bird and the whisper of the sea both reveal to him the beneficence of death in delivering the soul back into the immortality of love. In "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd" the hermit thrush sings the same praises of death—"death's outlet song of life." Through death will come rebirth, resurrection of the spirit. "We know that we have passed from death into life, because we love the brethren," says St. John (I, 3:14). "He that loveth not his brother, abideth in death."

The effects of love—in Whitman's and Dostoyevsky's views—are at times little short of miraculous, either on individuals or on whole societies. And the effects are equally miraculous both

on those who love and those who are loved. Very close to modern medical and religious thought is the comment of Whitman about the curative effects of love as he had seen them in the Civil War hospitals. "To many of the wounded and sick, especially the youngsters, there is something in personal love, caresses, and the magnetic flow of sympathy and friendship, that does in its way, more than all the medicine in the world. . . . [I] could help, and turn the balance in favor of cure, by the means here alluded to, in a curiously large proportion of cases."¹⁵

"A man may be saved by loving," wrote Middleton Murry in regard to Stavrogin in Dostoyevsky's *The Possessed*, "but not by being loved."¹⁶ The first part of Murry's statement would meet with the wholehearted approval of Dostoyevsky and Whitman, but the second would not. The chief point made by both writers is the Christian one that love begets love and that all love is redemptive. Whitman knew this from firsthand experience:

Full of wickedness I—of many a smutch'd deed reminiscent—of
worse deeds capable,
Yet I look composedly upon nature, drink day and night the joys of
life, and await death with perfect equanimity,
Because of my tender and boundless love for him I love and because
of his boundless love for me.¹⁷

Dostoyevsky in his personal life did not achieve the tender compassion that Whitman achieved, or at least not so consistently. We know he was not incapable of it. One of the men in the convict party in which Dostoyevsky was transported to Siberia told years later how he was saved from suicide by Dostoyevsky at Tobolsk where they had stopped for six days. "It was Dostoyevsky's gentle and sympathetic voice, his sensitiveness, his delicacy of feeling, his playful sallies—all this exercised a tranquillizing influence on me and I abandoned my desperate resolve. Next morning I took leave of Dostoyevsky. . . . We em-

braced with tears and we never saw each other again.”¹⁸ Dostoevsky’s whole personality, according to this commentator, revealed itself as feminine and motherly, exactly as we know for a certainty Whitman’s was. One result of this femininity in both authors was an ability to find joy in life even in suffering—an ability which may account for the lower incidence of suicides among women than among men.

“Even on this earth it is possible for men to be brothers,” says Alyosha to Captain Snegiryov, the man whom Dmitri had dragged through the streets by his beard. Alyosha is pressing the Captain to accept a gift of money, for his son is ill and the family is living in fearful poverty. He accepts the money at last but a few minutes later throws it onto the ground and stamps on it in an outburst of pride. His action is a fine example of the hate resulting from humiliation, which we have already discussed. Snegiryov tortures himself as an act of revenge on society and for the masochistic satisfaction he himself derives from it. Before rejecting the money he had been picturing to Alyosha all that he could do with it: it would enable him to go to another town, where he was promised a job, to buy medicine for his son, Ilusha, to send his daughter back to the university. Then in a paroxysm of hate, directed inward as well as outward, he flings the money down, shouting that he won’t insult his family by accepting it.

Can we be brothers on this earth? In spite of the Captain’s refusal to be treated as a brother, Alyosha thinks men can be brothers. Thus he sets patiently about healing the spiritual ulcer that is destroying the Snegiryov family. His chief medicine is love. Ilusha’s archenemy has been Kolya Krassotkin, a precocious lad, the son of a widow, who is suggestive of what Ivan might have been at the age of thirteen. He is smarter than his teachers, considers belief in God hopelessly old-fashioned, and is a socialist. In short he is a snob, temporarily under the influence of the opportunist Rakitin. As the acknowledged leader

among the boys in Ilusha's school, Kolya was among the first to tease Ilusha about his father's humiliation at the hands of Dmitri. In a frenzy of anger, Ilusha stabs him with a penknife and henceforth the two are mortal enemies. It is a boys' story—a boys' feud—but in it Dostoyevsky sees the fester at the base of most human hate and the suffering that inevitably grows from hate. Alyosha sets about substituting love in the place of this hate. To do so he must induce the boys, through their leader Kolya, to do some act of love for Ilusha, because Alyosha, like his preceptor Father Zossima, knows that love exists only in action, not in words. "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth." (I John 3:18)

In the anger of his hurt pride, as he lashes out at everyone and everything around him, Ilusha has fed his dog Zhutchka a piece of bread with a pin in it—a trick taught him by Smerdyakov. The dog, of course, ran away yelping, and Ilusha, supposing it had died, is heartbroken with remorse. Kolya, however, has found the dog unharmed, changed its name, and set about teaching it a repertoire of fantastic tricks. Kolya, like Ivan, is not evil but he is self-centered. He pities Ilusha, perhaps loves him. He is willing to make it up with Ilusha, probably because his ego cannot tolerate not being liked by everybody. Besides, Ilusha has become seriously ill and revenge on a helpless person is not to Kolya's taste. It is more impressive to forgive—but to forgive with a flourish, with the spotlight trained on the act. Like Madame Hohlakov, he must have gratitude for his good deeds, not realizing that anyone can be good if he is assured of sufficient applause.

Alyosha exploits this situation. He encourages Kolya to forgive Ilusha and to comfort him by returning the dog, over whose supposed death Ilusha is grieving. Kolya enters into the project with great zest and fanfare. He rallies the boy's school friends to his bedside and in their presence gives him a toy cannon, and

at last he returns the dog Zhutchka whom he puts through his newly learned tricks. At last, under Alyosha's influence, Kolya comes to realize that he has been guilty of "conceit, egoistic vanity and beastly willfulness" in not coming sooner to Ilusha and in going through with his good deed more for the credit it would bring to him than for the comfort it would afford his stricken playmate. He and Alyosha have a heart-to-heart talk which Kolya enthusiastically describes as "a declaration of love," adding, "That's not ridiculous, is it?"

"Not at all ridiculous, and if it were, it would not matter, because it's been a good thing," Alyosha answers.¹⁹ And the love between these two, and among all the schoolboys as they exert themselves to making Ilusha's last days happy, is Whitman's love of comrades—"adhesiveness." This comradeship is further cemented at the funeral of Ilusha, which is described in the last pages of the novel. Alyosha's speech to the boys at the stone that was Ilusha's favorite place to walk to outside the village is a solvent for all human bitterness.

"Ah, children, ah, dear friends, don't be afraid of life! How good life is when one does something good and just!"

"Yes, yes," the boys repeated enthusiastically.

"Karamazov, we love you!" a voice cried impulsively.

"We love you, we love you!" they all caught it up. Tears glistened in the eyes of many of them. . . .

"Well, now we will finish talking and go to the funeral dinner. Don't be put out at our eating pancakes—it's a very old custom and there's something nice in that!" laughed Alyosha. "Well, let us go! And now we go, hand in hand!"

"And always so, all our lives hand in hand! Hurrah for Karamazov!" Kolya cried once more rapturously and once more the boys took up his exclamation.²⁰

Far back in the novel Ivan had said: "To my thinking, Christ-like love for men is a miracle impossible on earth." He makes

this remark in answer to an assertion of Alyosha's: "There's a great deal of love in mankind and almost Christ-like love, I know that myself, Ivan."²¹

The episode of the boys is Dostoyevsky's way of saying that the intellectual Ivan is wrong and the intuitive Alyosha is correct. "Hurrah for Karamazov!" Hurrah for mankind! Men can love one another even on earth. And we add, for the benefit of the twentieth century, without homosexuality.

The emotionalism of Dostoyevsky may seem more acceptable to English-speaking readers because as a Russian he has a tradition of emotionalism (so the myth goes), but in an American or an Englishman such outpourings as those of Dostoyevsky and Whitman on the subject of brotherly love are considered indecent. Yet both cultures, not only in our own century but in the last, claim to be based on the ideal of the brotherhood of man. It is on this common ground only that Dostoyevsky and Whitman would admit the possibility of establishing peace. This is the ultimate message of each of these great artists—each a spokesman for his nation—and what they have to say must not be blurred by irrelevancies such as the questions of Whitman's sexual orientation and Dostoyevsky's epilepsy. Transcending the idiosyncrasies of each is a saving faith in the human race that must not be ignored in our times. For if Dostoyevsky and Whitman are wrong—and men are not able to be brothers on earth—then humanity is doomed for early extinction. We had better be very, very sure of our own rightness before we cross them off as mere visionaries or perverts.

Love to Dostoyevsky and Whitman was the most powerful force in the world—more powerful even than hate. Today and perhaps always in history, hate has been considered stronger than love. It is "safer" for the United States to hate Russia, and Russia the United States, for then each will be prepared to destroy the other. One doesn't prepare for the destruction of those

one loves. Hate to us is a social force; love is sheer weakness. But to Dostoyevsky and Whitman love was a social force greater than hate. As its extreme, this conviction is expressed by Father Zossima. "At some thoughts one stands perplexed, especially at the sight of man's sin, and wonders whether one should use force or humble love. Always decide to use humble love. If you resolve on that once for all, you may subdue the whole world. Loving humility is a terrible force, the strongest of all things and there is nothing else like it."²² This is a purely Tolstoyan, a pacifist, view, and one that Dostoyevsky could not encompass either in his own life or in his political views, for he was irascible by nature, and a saber-rattler in regard to such matters as the liberation of the Balkan Slavs and the colonization of Asia. Yet it was his ideal, and it is essentially contained in his view of the Russian capacity for love. "Among all the nations the Russian soul, the genius of the Russian people is, perhaps, most apt to embrace the idea of the universal fellowship of man, of brotherly love,—that sober point of view which forgives that which is hostile; which distinguishes and excuses that which is desperate; which removes contradictions."²³ Russia's political mission, he thinks, will be to extend the brotherhood of man throughout the world as well as within her own expanding borders. "For what else is the strength of the Russian national spirit than the aspiration, in its ultimate goal, for universality and all-embracing humanitarianism? . . . To become a genuine Russian means to seek finally to reconcile all European controversies, to show the solution of European anguish in our all-humanitarian and all-unifying Russian soul, to embrace in it with brotherly love all our brethren, and finally, perhaps, to utter the ultimate word of great, universal harmony, of the brotherly accord of all nations abiding by the laws of Christ's Gospel."²⁴ This outlook is an expression of what historians have called Russian Messianism, rife in Dostoyevsky's day and not alien, in modified form, to com-

munism. But in Dostoyevsky it is a benign aspiration, one for domination by the spirit rather than by the sword. The star that Dostoyevsky's ardently nationalist monks say will rise in the east is not the Red Star of world revolution and class warfare. Rather it is the star which rose in Judea two thousand years ago to lead the kings to Bethlehem.

To Whitman love was no less a political force. To heal the terrible wounds inflicted on the Union during the Civil War he looked exclusively to love. In the poem "The Base of All Metaphysics" he states that after a study of all the systems "new and antique, the Greek and the Germanic," and after studying long "Christ the divine," he sees beneath all philosophies and Christian churches one single "base and finale."

The dear love of man for his comrade, the attraction of friend to friend,
Of the well-married husband and wife, of children and parents,
Of city for city and land for land.²⁵

And in a nation torn by civil war,

. . . affection shall solve the problems of freedom yet,
Those who love each other shall become invincible,
They shall yet make Columbia victorious. . . .
I, ecstatic, O partners! O lands! with the love of lovers tie you.
(Were you looking to be held together by lawyers?
Or by an agreement on a paper? or by arms?
Nay, nor the world, nor any living thing, will so cohere.)²⁶

VI

LIFE

Life is grand and so are its environments of Past and Future. Would the face of nature be so serene and beautiful if man's destiny were not equally so?

H. D. THOREAU

"I have a great longing for life," says Ivan Karamazov, "and I go on living in spite of logic. Though I may not believe in the order of the universe, yet I love the sticky little leaves as they open in the spring. I love the blue sky, I love some people, whom one loves sometimes without knowing why. I love some great deeds done by men. . . ."

And Alyosha answers, "I think every one should love life above everything in the world."

"Love life more than the meaning of it?"

"Certainly, love it, regardless of logic as you say, it must be regardless of logic, and it's only then one will understand it."¹

This love of life is celebrated throughout Dostoyevsky's writings, almost as persistently as in Whitman's verse. Next to love of God, love of life is the basic love. In fact, one cannot love God

or other persons without loving life. The person who loves life is a saved person, as the Ancient Mariner is saved the moment he blesses the watersnakes. One must love life despite one's sufferings, despite the evils one sees around one. "Listen, Kolya," Alyosha says, "you will be very unhappy in your life. . . . But you will bless life on the whole, all the same."² As Innokenti remarks in Pasternak's *Dr. Zhivago*: "It's wonderful to be alive but why does it always hurt?" Love of life, despite evil and suffering, is of course a fundamental theme in Whitman. In his poem "Thanks in Old Age," he gives thanks not only for "Life, mere life" and all the good things that go with it—"health, the mid-day sun, the impalpable air," but for "the days of war." The human body was the supreme wonder for Whitman, but he gives tremendous lists of all the other things he has loved; and the zest with which he writes these lists puts one in mind of Ivan's enthusiasm for "the sticky little leaves," though Whitman's appetite for the physical sensations of life is also spiritualized by a mysticism suggestive of Father Zossima's when that monk exhorts his listeners to give their love to all of God's creation. Whitman succeeds, where Ivan fails, in loving life rather than the meaning of it—that is, despite logic.

When I heard the learn'd astronomer,
When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns before me . . .
How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick,
Till rising and gliding out I wander'd off by myself,
In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time
Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars. . . .³

In a similar vein in *The Brothers Karamazov* Father Paissy warns Alyosha against the cruel analysis of science which "has only analyzed the parts and overlooked the whole"⁴ with a blindness as "marvelous" as that of Whitman's learned astronomer. Both Dostoyevsky and Whitman would agree with the Vedantic

viewpoint as described by Erich Fromm: "Thought is only a more subtle horizon of ignorance, in fact the most subtle of all the deluding devices of Maya."⁵

Analytical science, logic, to both Whitman and Dostoyevsky, was destructive of wonder, and without wonder there can be no love. Whitman, like Thoreau, made it a point "to wash the gum" from his readers' eyes so that they could habit themselves "to the dazzle of the light of every moment of [their] life."⁶ Life must be a perpetual hymn of joy, as it was to Adam at the dawn of creation. For life is always the supreme miracle and a miracle constantly renewing itself. When one becomes conscious of this miracle, as Alyosha does under the stars on the night of his beloved elder's death, then one is ready to become a lover of mankind. In Dostoyevsky and Whitman the sense of wonder is associated with the earth and is felt when one comes into contact with the earth, either from lying on it, as with Whitman, or from kissing it, as with Dostoyevsky. In Dostoyevsky's novels love of life is a strength of his regenerated characters. Dmitri will sing his hymn of joy even in the salt mines in the midst of his penitential suffering. Perhaps more convincing is the case of Shatov in *The Possessed*, who, long a misled revolutionary, has been metamorphosed into an ardent lover of mankind. On the evening of his murder by his former corevolutionists his wife returns after a separation of three years. She arrives immediately to go into labor with a child conceived in a union with Shatov's archenemy, Stavrogin, a brilliant but totally degenerate nobleman into whose family Shatov was born a serf. The birth takes place in a squalid room on a back alley close by the dwelling of the suicidal psychotic Kirillov. In surroundings of horror the baby is born.

"It is a great joy," Shatov says to the midwife, who is a woman of advanced thought.

"Where does the great joy come in?"

"The mysterious coming of a new creature, a great and insoluble mystery. . . . There were two, and now there's a third human being, a new spirit, finished and complete, unlike the handiwork of man; a new thought and a new love . . . it's positively frightening and there is nothing grander in the world." The midwife answers that there is nothing mysterious about it. "It's simply a further development of the organism."⁷ The child, she maintains, is socially and economically superfluous: better if it had not been born, for it will forthwith have to be sent to the foundlings' home. If one considers a human baby a mystery one would have to consider a fly a mystery—which would be no task for Dostoyevsky or for Whitman, who considered a pismire or a blade of grass no less a wonder than the "journey work of the stars."

This ecstatic love of life has a modern ring, though its origins are deep in the Christian past. It has in fact become closely associated with Christianity, as with Pasternak or Schweitzer, or a substitute for it, as with Thomas Mann.

As a dominant symbol in traditional Christianity is a woman, the Virgin Mary, so too in the modern life-worship woman is often the chief symbol. Whitman writes:

As I see my soul reflected in Nature,
As I see through a mist, One with inexpressible completeness, sanity,
 beauty,
See the bent head and arms folded over the breast, the Female I see.⁸

Sonya in Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* and Grushenka after her regeneration through her love for Dmitri are perhaps equivalent of Whitman's vision. These women are not mere sex symbols. Both Sonya and Grushenka are Mary Magdalene—spiritualized whores, embodiments of sex and soul simultaneously. To every man, Freud said, every woman is a potential

mother, sister, mistress. Such are Sonya and Grushenka and, from the viewpoint of Whitman, women in general; he describes them as his sisters and his lovers. In both Dostoyevsky and Whitman woman in her sexual role is a bearer not only of pleasure but also of pain, and as such, we have seen, is to be feared and even hated, though of course lusted after. But in her other roles she is to be tenderly cherished, even worshiped, as Whitman worshiped his mother. The mother role reaches its consummation in Dostoyevsky and Whitman when it is assigned to the beloved homeland—Mother Russia and “Thou Mother with Thy Equal Brood.” The soil itself is to be kissed and embraced and clung to, not without oedipal implications.

We have seen already that in Thomas Mann’s work passionate love of woman may be merged with love of death, so that sensual love and death are one. Yet by one of those paradoxes that Mann so liked, love of woman can be transformed to love of life as well as of death. In *The Magic Mountain* the bourgeois hero Hans Castorp takes up the study of biology as the result of his infatuation with the body of Mme. Chauchat. As a result of his study, one Alpine night on the porch of the sanatorium where he has sequestered himself from the humdrum life of the flatlands he beholds the all-embracing image of this same Mme. Chauchat, who is later to be his mistress for a night. As his affair with Mme. Chauchat approaches consummation, his preoccupation with death—his actual longing for it—grows and comes to be dominant in his life. Only years later this love is switched into a love of life and the human race. Almost frozen to death he drops into a death sleep during a blizzard on a Swiss mountainside where he has gone on his skis. In his sleep he dreams of the Golden Age, sees a vision of humanity in its pristine beauty on the Grecian Archipelago, just as do Dostoyevsky’s Ridiculous Man and Versilov (in *Raw Youth*) and Stavrogin. But in the midst of Hans’s dream of human beauty and joy there is horror

also: the blood sacrifice performed by hideous hags behind the marble columns of the temple that stands above the seashore where the beautiful children play. Yet it is a good dream, and Hans awakes from it dedicated to love of life despite the presence of horror and death within the temple. With his love of life he loses the last traces of his merely sexual love of Mme. Chauchat, his passion for whom had led him so far along the paths of death.

A very recent and impressive example of the use of woman as a life symbol occurs in Pasternak's *Dr. Zhivago*. Lara, a somewhat sullied woman sexually, like Grushenka or Sonya or Mme. Chauchat, becomes for Dr. Zhivago an embodiment of life, something that one longs to serve because one loves it. That she attracts all sorts—idealist revolutionists, political opportunists, or poets like the Doctor himself—attests to her universality. Weak, perhaps fickle, yet beautiful and desirable above all other things—she is the ultimate that all men strive to corrupt or ennoble according to their natures.

In all these cases sexual love, the destructive force, has led into and been spiritualized by a love of life as miracle and as divine. The ultimate in this life-worship is the complete infusion of the divine in man, which is exactly the goal toward which Whitman and the American transcendentalists before him were heading and which is approached in Dostoyevsky's emphasis upon the Godlike potential in all mankind. To Whitman man's belief in his own divinity is the sole basis of hope for man's rising above his present half-animal, half-divine condition and coming into his full heritage as a "son of God." This same notion that men are—or can be—"sons of God" has Biblical sanction and is a major theme in Dostoyevsky's works. To regard his life, and all life, as miraculous and of divine origin is completely in accord with Father Zossima's teaching: "If you love everything, you will perceive the divine mystery in things."

We should look upon God's universe with wonder and love it, say Dostoyevsky and Whitman. Both regarded life as a voyage of perpetual discovery. In *The Idiot* Hyppolyte, a youth about to die of consumption says; "Oh, you may be perfectly sure that if Columbus was happy, it was not after he had discovered America, but when he was discovering it. What did the New World matter after all? Columbus had hardly seen it when he died, and in reality he was entirely ignorant of what he had discovered. The important thing is life—life and nothing else! What is any 'discovery' whatever compared with the incessant, eternal discovery of life?"⁹ These could be the words of Whitman, who also employed the symbols of voyaging, traveling, exploring to describe the miraculous adventure of life. In his "Prayer of Columbus" he speaks through the mouth of the great navigator, who doesn't even mention the feat for which he was famous but rather, in his old age, gives thanks for the gift of life which God

hast lighted
With ray of light, steady, ineffable.¹⁰

In his "Song of the Open Road" and in "Pioneers, O Pioneers" Whitman celebrates life as spiritual wayfaring and migration into new and wonderful territories of the soul. And in one of his greatest lyrics, "Passage to India," he sees in the engineering achievements of the times—the transcontinental railroad, the Atlantic cable, the Suez Canal—symbols of the advance of man into universal brotherhood and back to that spiritual realm, India, "the land of budding Bibles," where man's spiritual life originated and whither it is man's destiny to return.

O soul, repressless, I with thee and thou with me,
Thy circumnavigation of the world begin,
Of man, the voyage of his mind's return
To reason's early paradise.

Back, back to wisdom's birth, to innocent intuitions,
Again with fair creation.¹¹

What awaits the explorer at the end of his voyage of discovery? Truth, of course, truth of the brotherhood of man, of the beauty of life, of the supremacy of the soul. In his great short story, "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man," Dostoyevsky also describes a voyage, this one of a type that man is, in our times, literally on the verge of making, a voyage into outer space. The Ridiculous Man—ridiculous because his convictions are so contrary to the accepted beliefs of his day—dreams he travels to some distant world where the inhabitants live in harmony, brotherhood, simplicity and fearlessness even of death. The arrival of the earthman brings disharmony and moral degradation into this paradise, and one wonders when man actually moves out into space if he will carry his depravity with him. But the important thing is the Ridiculous Man's vision of this society before it is contaminated by his arrival. It is a Whitmanesque vision of all men attuned to one feeling—the love of comrades. When he awakes the Ridiculous Man is a dedicated man who assumes the role of poet-preacher, like Dostoyevsky and Whitman. To this end alone he longs to live. "I am going to preach. I want to preach. What? Why, truth. For I've beheld the truth, I have beheld it with my own eyes, I have beheld it in all its glory." And this truth is simply "that people can be happy and beautiful without losing the ability to live on earth." It is a denial of the belief "that evil is the normal condition among men." It is a denial of the blighting heresy of the intellectual that "the consciousness of life is higher than life, the knowledge of happiness is higher than happiness." It is an affirmation that "the main thing is to love your neighbor as yourself—that is the main thing, and that is everything, for nothing else mat-

ters.”¹² This is none other than God’s purpose for man, as Whitman says in “Passage to India”:

The earth is to be spann’d, connected by network,
The races, neighbors, to marry and be given in marriage,
The oceans to be cross’d, the distant brought near,
The lands to be welded together.¹³

This is the end of all spiritual exploration, the wonder of wonders of life—a dream that even the most depraved of men, even Stavrogin in Dostoyevsky’s *The Possessed* has dreamed. “Oh, marvelous dream, lofty illusion! The most improbable of all visions, to which mankind throughout its existence has given its best energies, for which it has sacrificed, for which it has pined and been tormented, for which its prophets were crucified and killed, without which nations will not desire to live, and without which they cannot even die!”¹⁴

VII

THE NEW MAN

Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

John 3:7

Both Russians and Americans in the nineteenth century were convinced their countries would produce new men, new societies. In the United States the idea, or hope, may be traced at least as far back as Crèvecoeur, who wrote during and right after the Revolution. In his essay "What Is an American?" he delineates a representative individual radically different from any that ever existed in Europe. This "new man," the American, was of a racial stock so mixed that it actually constituted a new race. The individual himself was independent in his views, was the holder of substantial property, usually land, to an extent undreamed of in Europe, was in general a freer and superior human being. Herein American humanity seemed to have been born anew in a better, a new world.

This idea was commonly accepted on both sides of the Atlantic. It was basic in Jefferson's distinction between a natural and an artificial aristocracy. It found one of its most popular expressions in Fenimore Cooper's character Natty Bumppo,

variously known as the Deerslayer, Hawkeye or Leatherstocking. Bumpo was a true son of the wilderness, unlettered but naturally wise and good, and very shrewd. Subservient to nobody, he was a supporter of justice and the worshiper of a pantheistic nature God. Like those of Crèvecoeur's American, Natty's spiritual, physical, and intellectual specifications had been laid down by Rousseau in the eighteenth century. Like Tolstoy's and Dostoyevsky's Russian peasants, these Americans were true sons of nature, "natural men." The shadow of Rousseau—or his light—lay across the nineteenth century and has extended into our own times.

The American's image of himself as different from and superior to the European was of course a political force, which rose to a frenzied climax in the presidency of Andrew Jackson. In literature the new American appeared in multitudes. One of the most painstaking portraits of him was that drawn by Whitman in *Democratic Vistas*, but Whitman's was a man of the future, existing thus far only in embryo. We will shortly examine him in detail. Preceding Whitman's vision of the American of the future was that of the Concord Transcendentalists, Thoreau and Emerson, whose influence on Whitman was great. The self-reliant man, spiritual rather than materialistic in his orientation, sloughing off the encrustations of the dead forms of dead cultures and emerging in the sheen of his newborn humanity—that was the image conjured by Emerson, and especially by Thoreau in his depiction of himself leading a life of physical simplicity but of spiritual profundity at Walden Pond. To use a phrase of Henry James, Senior, in his famous "Newport Address," the ultimate fruit of American democracy would be "man himself unqualified by convention."

The most subtly drawn of the New Americans are those in Henry James, Junior's, novels, and perhaps the most typical of these is the hero of *The American*, whose name by no coinci-

dence is Christopher Newman! Armored in kindliness, simplicity, intelligence, shrewdness, innocence, and an impeccable morality, Newman travels to Europe at the age of thirty-five or forty to enjoy his hard but honestly earned fortune and to find a wife. Whitman would have appreciated the fact that this American of Americans was a veteran of the Civil War and a resident of San Francisco, for the West in Whitman's view would be the natural habitat of the New America. Newman courts and wins the beautiful Madame de Cintr , the widowed daughter of an ancient, proud, and corrupt French noble family. But Mme. de Cintr  is under the domination of her relatives. Having promised her hand to Newman, she is forced by her mother and brother to withdraw it. In a surge of anger Newman looks about him for a means of vengeance and of forcing the family to accept him, and in doing so he runs afoul of feudalism in its most degenerate form. He uncovers a murder in the family, thus putting himself in a position to get his revenge. But Newman rises above such selfishness. The woman he had hoped to marry has fled to a convent in desperation and Newman, having irretrievably lost her, burns the document whereby he could prove the murder. The natural aristocracy of his character keeps him from lowering himself to the level of the artificial aristocrats. Newman is indeed "man unqualified by convention," as is beautifully demonstrated in the contrast between him and Valentine, the younger son of the family into which Newman had hoped to marry. Valentine is essentially a good man—loyal, honest, affectionate, a true comrade. Yet he is so shackled by convention that he feels compelled to fight a duel over a whore and is futilely killed as a consequence. Similarly, Newman's fianc e, though essentially a loving and honest woman, cannot sufficiently free herself from an outworn code of behavior to marry a good man whom she loves.

Even more significant to James is the contrast between Amer-

ican and European women. His novels are full of "new women," young ones usually, who are marked by an innocent unconventionality—in other words, a naturalness—which carries them triumphantly through the perils of a less idealistic European society. Even when they are defeated by the older society their defeat constitutes a moral victory. Such is the case with Daisy Miller, James's most popular heroine. Slightly "vulgar," but appallingly honest and totally innocent, Daisy refuses to submit to pointless European attitudes and conventions. She flirts with a nondescript Italian, thus destroying her social standing in the American and British society in Rome. But the flirtation is at worst a protest against the stuffiness of a Europeanized American whom she loves and who loves her but is too priggish to admit, even to himself, his love for a girl that Society frowns upon. When Daisy dies of "Roman fever" after a nocturnal visit to the Colosseum with her Italian beau, it is a hollow triumph for convention, since she wears the crown of a martyr.

The ideal of a new, democratic humanity faded in American literature in the twentieth century. In place of the Newmans and the Daisies there arose a horde of Sister Carries and Babbitts, mere automatons jumping to the dictates of glands and conventions. Abroad, too, the illusion, if it was that, faded, giving place to an image of the American as a crass unimaginative materialist. Even a new land couldn't produce a new man, and Americans were, if anything, a bit worse than Europeans. This, too, was a symptom of humanity's loss of faith in itself along with its faith in God. Henceforth mankind seemed satisfied to be assigned a place in the universe as simply a rather complicated biochemical reaction. Nowhere on earth was it generally hoped that man could rise above the old fettering forms and traditions, because man was no longer deemed capable of re-creating himself, anywhere, any more than a machine.

In Russia, also, in the nineteenth century an ideal of the new

man was taking shape, though perhaps a much less likable one than the new man of America. In Russia, however, the new man was also one who had stripped himself of conventions and stood in all his dignity and potency as an untrammelled human being. But the Russians had the misfortune to live in a reactionary, unyielding social order, suffocated by forms and conventions, whereas America was at the time, by European standards, a mildly revolutionary society. Thus the American, theoretically, had merely to be himself, for his political and social ideals supported him in his revolt against obsolete customs. But the Russian was perforce a revolutionary, a nihilist, who must defy and destroy the old culture before he could free himself and his countrymen for a new life.

The Russian new man in his most exaggerated and unbelievable form is exemplified by a character named Rakhmetov in a very popular nineteenth-century novel, *What Is To Be Done?* by Chernyshevsky. Rakhmetov is a "rigorist," a political radical, who has cut his life clear of all personal, sentimental entanglements and has devoted himself to the one goal of liberating mankind from the old order. In his own way he is as incredible as Natty Bumppo—an impossible result of a severing of all ties of custom and tradition. Rakhmetov has schooled himself in a regime of self-discipline that involves such practices as sleeping on a bed of nails. He is the revolutionary ascetic, man in the raw, unspoiled by society, finding his sole purpose in the one service that matters, the betterment of mankind. Fantastic though Rakhmetov may be, his example was taken very seriously by such real-life revolutionaries as Lenin and Dmitrov (an instigator of the Reichstag fire in Hitlerite Germany). Both of these eminents claim to have modeled their lives after Chernyshevsky's "rigorist." In Soviet literature Rakhmetov has been duplicated countless times. A very remarkable instance is Pasha Antipov in *Dr. Zhivago*—a character who has gone to such

extremes in molding and twisting himself to an ideal that he rejects not only family but, as a suicide, life itself.

Pasternak's portrayal of the revolutionary new man was unfavorably critical, but he was far from the first to take this stand. Turgenev's novels contains a number of new men and women, none of whom are entirely admirable. Best known of them is Bazarov in *Fathers and Sons*. Turgenev himself couldn't decide just how he felt about his "nihilist" Bazarov (the term "nihilist" had its origin in this book). Turgenev was a Westernizer in favor of fairly far-reaching reforms, but he was far from a revolutionary. He could sympathize with Bazarov's desire for change but not with his attempted self-dehumanization. Thus when Bazarov, an enthusiastic scientist, states that the study of frogs is as important as the study of people, or that humanity is like a birch forest in that if you study one tree or person you know them all, so negligible are the differences between individual trees or people—here Turgenev obviously shies off. He is loath to see humanity lose spiritual status. Thus, almost vengefully, Turgenev causes his hero to lose his battle against his own humanity. Though Bazarov's pose is that he is above all such human "weaknesses" as anger and love, in the course of the book he almost strangles his best friend in a murderous rage, fights a duel with an elderly gentleman, and succumbs to sentimental love, which he tried unsuccessfully to treat as a mere biological urge and which sidetracks him seriously from his single purpose of remaking mankind. Finally he falls prey to that greatest of human frailties, death, which in his frustration he seems willfully to seek.

Turgenev has created a few strong-willed nihilist women who almost achieve their impossible goals of dehumanizing themselves, but most of his would-be new men are failures. The one notable exception is Solomin, a factory manager, in *Virgin Soil*. After several reforming zealots have been arrested and one has

killed himself as a result of his total failure to establish contact with the peasants, Solomin remains as a man of moderation and understanding. He, too, earnestly desires reform, but he has been able to accomplish much already without resort to fantasy or extremism. His own factory has instituted peasant schools and maintained reasonably humane working conditions. A peasant himself, he is practical, level-headed, conscientious. He is a man of the people who has the sympathy and the ability to help the people—but it will all take time.

Turgenev's point is: character, not theory, is what is needed for the social betterment of Russia. Tolstoy would agree. His character Levin, who is the real hero of *Anna Karenina* and who is Tolstoy himself in very transparent disguise, is as distrustful as Solomin of reforms that have their roots not in the hearts of the people but in the minds of Westernized intellectuals. Levin moves slowly but firmly toward real social amelioration. He doesn't force his own personality into any "rigorist" mold or fight against his own humanity, but rather remains himself—an altruistic and conscientious nobleman who strives for a gradual, not convulsive, change in Russian society. Reform is necessary; all men of good will desire it. Tolstoy says that Nekhludov, the hero of *Resurrection*, had a sense "of the beauty and importance of life, and man's serious place in it; [youth] sees the possibility of infinite perfection of which the world is capable."¹ But Nekhludov, also, is an evolutionist rather than a revolutionist. His achievement of stature as a humanitarian comes only after spiritual rather than intellectual growth. To Tolstoy as to Turgenev the fountainhead of significant reform is the heart, the character, and not the mind.

Out of the spirit of the times in Russia and America—and indeed of the nineteenth century throughout the West—Whitman and Dostoyevsky shaped their own images of the new man.

For both, the new man was not an exceptional but an ordinary person who can be duplicated in the masses. The concept of the superman is foreign to both. Whitman very concretely sets down his specifications in *Democratic Vistas*. To begin with, Whitman conceives of the new man as a being of the future; with the exception of Lincoln he is nonexistent in nineteenth-century America. "Are there indeed *men* here worthy of the name? Are there athletes? Are there perfect women, to match the generous material luxuriance? Is there a pervading atmosphere of beautiful manners? Are there crops of fine youths, and majestic old persons? . . . Confess that to severe eyes, using the moral microscope upon humanity, a sort of dry and flat Sahara appears, these cities, crowded with petty grotesques, malformations, phantoms, playing meaningless antics. Confess that everywhere, in shop, street, church, theatre, bar-room, official chair, are pervading flippancy and vulgarity, low cunning, infidelity—everywhere the youth puny, impudent, foppish, prematurely ripe—everywhere an abnormal libidinousness, unhealthy forms, male, female, padded, painted, dyed, chignon'd, muddy complexions, bad blood. . . ."2 The picture is "lamentable," as Whitman says. Yet it is from this unpromising material that the new American must be fashioned, for only "the average man of a land at last is important."³ Whitman's hope for the future arises from his Civil War experiences, which gave him inklings of the magnificent potential of the American common man—especially those from the rural North—for self-sacrifice, devotion, and idealism.

The character of the new American must have its foundation in that profound and intuitive religious mysticism, which Whitman, in a passage already quoted, describes as "the thought of identity—yours for you, whoever you are, as mine for me. Miracle of miracles, beyond statement, most spiritual and vaguest of earth's dreams, yet hardest basic fact." From this

"hardest basic fact," which is that of man's divine origin, Whitman never strayed in any of his thinking. Upon this spiritual foundation the modern personality must be constructed. "Beyond the vertebration of the manly and womanly personalism of our Western world, can only be, and is, indeed, to be (I hope) its all-penetrating Religiousness."⁴

Whitman now proceeds to give "however crudely, a basic model or portrait of personality for general use for the manliness of the States." As always, Whitman emphasizes in this model the physical as emblematic of the spiritual. The new humanity must possess strong, healthy, and beautiful bodies—"a general presence that holds its own in the company of the highest." For a healthy personality cannot inhabit an unhealthy body, and "it is native personality, and that alone, that endows a man to stand before presidents or generals, or in any distinguish'd collection, with *aplomb* —and *not* culture, or any knowledge or intellect whatever." Thus when he goes on to consider the "mental-educational part of our model, enlargement of intellect, stores of cephalic knowledge," Whitman finds no improvement necessary. In fact, he hints that we are perhaps already overdoing bookish education. Personality is a function of the spirit rather than the intellect. Much more important than the intellect is the "simple, unsophisticated Conscience, the primary moral element." This element he finds stunted dangerously in "our triumphant modern civilizee, with his all-schooling and his wondrous appliances."⁵ Conscience is part of the religiousness that Whitman considers indispensable to perfect selfhood; conscience is a function of "the identified soul." Whitman, like Dostoyevsky, always regards morality, conscience, as an absolute, its basic law being that of love of neighbor, the Golden Rule. Conscience exists outside space and time, and is in no way relative from century to century, tribe to tribe, or nation to nation.

Whitman draws up specifications for a new woman to replace the imported literary models—"Ophelias, Enids, princesses, or ladies of one thing or another, [who] fill the envying dreams of so many poor girls, and are accepted by our men, too, as supreme ideals of feminine excellence to be sought after." To clear "this fossil and unhealthy air which hangs about the word *lady*," he presents some women of his own acquaintance—"just for a change," as he says. These women, taken from real life as examples of the future, are of limited education, robust health, pronounced independence, wide resourcefulness, dedicated motherhood. They are women of the people, unsophisticated but living in an aura of "that indescribable perfume of genuine womanhood." As for women's rights, a burning question of the day, Whitman is unconcerned. The women he presents already enjoy a limitless scope of activity which is theirs for the asking, irrespective of social legislation. Most important, "we must recast the types of highest personality from what the oriental, feudal ecclesiastical worlds bequeathed us. . . . Of course, the old undying elements remain. The task is to successfully adjust them to new combinations, our own days . . . cease to recognize a theory of character grown of feudal aristocracies, or form'd by merely literary standards, or from any ultramarine, full-dress formulas of culture. . . ." The future American man or woman must be constructed anew out of the fundamental spiritual and material elements of human nature. The artificialities of other lands and centuries must be discarded. "Ever the fresh breeze of field, or hill, or lake, is more than any palpitation of fans, though of ivory, and redolent with perfume."⁶

The people are always of first importance to Whitman, but he recognizes that they must have leaders. These will be the poets, who will be not only the leaders but the servants of the people. Further, the poet would replace the priest, would assume the roll of prophet, and would reject the tricks and subjects of

fashionable rhymesters of the day. In his "Preface" to the 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman lists at great length the qualifications of the new poet. He must regard the United States as the greatest poem and he must accept the common people as his audience, his readers. Elite readerships and *recherché* subject matter from ancient mythologies and alien cultures must have no place in his poetry. The poet himself must have traveled far and wide among the States and must be acquainted with all manner of men. The requisite life for the poet is that all-inclusive one what Whitman himself experienced in the War hospitals, in his travels to New Orleans and the Far West, in his fraternizing with ferryboat pilots and teamsters. "Literature, strictly consider'd, has never recognized the People, and, whatever may be said, does not today. . . . I know of nothing more rare [in literature], even in this country, than a fit scientific estimate and reverent appreciation of the People—of their measureless wealth of latent power and capacity, their vast artistic contrasts of lights and shades. . . ."7 The reason for this is the isolation of the intellectuals from the masses. "Of all dangers to a nation, as things exist in our day, there can be no greater one than having certain portions of the people set off from the rest. . . ."8 Literature, if segregated, is useless or even harmful. But once the poet has achieved solidarity with the people his influence will become almost limitless. "He is the equalizer of his age and land . . . he supplies what wants supplying and checks what wants checking. If peace is the routine, out of him speaks the spirit of peace. . . . In war he is the most deadly force of the war."9 He is a seer, he is a man of limitless faith, he is the greatest of lovers, he is the champion of liberty, the candid recorder of life, the enemy of materialism, the mouthpiece of the present. As an artist he is an originator of new forms and techniques, functioning not by formula or imitation but by

inspiration as the channel whereby the spiritual flows into and transforms matter.

Dostoyevsky has also created a new man, but one in sharp contrast to that of the radical writers of Russia in his day, such as Chernyshevsky. He felt so strongly against these fanatical, dehumanized heroes—"leather men in leather jackets"—that he fashioned several important characters in his novels in their likeness in order to expose their weakness and their inhumanity. Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment* is one of these. His rejection of conscience, of the distinction between right and wrong as outworn superstition, and his motivation in the murder by the desire to aid humanity are earmarks of the new man, the nihilist, who feels he must destroy before he can build anew. As a rationalist of very superior intellect, Raskolnikov believes he is justified in flouting the Judaeo-Christian morality of others. In short, he is a pre-Nietzschean superman, self-appointed as all supermen must be, creating a new code of conduct for his sole guidance—and all with the questionable purpose of improving God's arrangement of things. Like Bazarov, Raskolnikov fails, but for more complex reasons. Bazarov succumbs to such human emotions as anger, passionate love, and despair, and is destroyed by them, Raskolnikov succumbs to conscience, which despite his "realism" he is unable to suppress. His whole project—to murder a pawnbroker and steal her money to finance his preparation to serve mankind—collapses in spite of the vigorous defense of his reason, which tells him the slaughter of a parasite, and even of her harmless but stupid sister, is a small price for the human race to pay for the great things that Raskolnikov will inevitably do. The novel, with great psychological subtlety, records Raskolnikov's undermining of his own intellectual stand. Slowly he regains his humanity, confesses his guilt,

S. Dostoyevsky

and goes to Siberia with the meek and saintly prostitute Sonya who has guided him along the path to redemption.

A more hardened and violent version of the new man is Pyotr Verhovensky in *The Possessed*. Pyotr is the son, neglected in childhood, of a flabby liberal—a “parlor pink,” as we would now call him, or a “superfluous man” as the Russians in the nineteenth century called such ineffectuals. Pyotr reacts bitterly against his father’s limpness and molds himself into a brutal, incredibly rude bully in whom the destructive impulse is so great that it has apparently extinguished the desire to help the downtrodden masses, an ideal of most of the new men. The social program that will develop from his activities will, according to his corevolutionist Shigalov, entail the slaughter of a hundred million people and the employment of every citizen as a spy against every other. As a prelude to destruction, Pyotr starts a riot, instigates several murders, and is responsible for the burning of half the town that he has chosen for his activities. With these accomplishments to his credit he departs for other scenes of nihilistic endeavor.

Another of Dostoyevsky’s unfavorable presentations of the new man is Kirillov, also in *The Possessed*. Kirillov is perhaps modeled after a Russian radical and literary of Dostoyevsky’s time—N. A. Dobrolyubov, who considered suicide the supreme act of protest when all other attempts failed to reform mankind. Kirillov, like Dobrolyubov, was of course an atheist. According to Kirillov, humanity persists in believing in God solely because of fear of death. Unless the fear of death can be rooted out of the human psyche, man will continue to believe in God and hence will not be entirely free. The nihilist wishes to erase all vestiges of man’s bondage. Thus the fear of death must be eliminated and suicide, in Kirillov’s logic, is the way of eliminating it. Taking his own life, a man asserts his total freedom and establishes himself as a god—a man-god—the sole free agent in

the universe. The logic is insane, yes, but so, in Dostoyevsky's thinking, were the new men.

These characters all fanatics obsessed with the desire to reform the world. That they destroy themselves or the people they hope to help is to Dostoyevsky the inevitable outcome, for fanaticism dehumanizes the heart, drives out compassion and love. Dehumanized persons can do nothing but harm to their fellow men. Whitman, too, shared this view regarding fanaticism, especially that of the extreme abolitionists of the Garrison or John Brown type. Whitman was opposed to slavery, just as Dostoyevsky was to the animalizing of the peasants in Russia. Yet he would agree that the way to reform is through love, not hate, the chief tool of the fanatics. The ruthless destructiveness of the more violent abolitionists was in fact suggestive of Pyotr Verhovensky. They were men who would destroy the Union and bring the calamity of war upon all the people, and all in the name of reform. In an editorial, Whitman writes that the Brooklyn *Eagle* despises and condemns "the dangerous fanatical insanity of 'Abolitionism'—as impracticable as it is wild."¹⁰ And he elsewhere asserts that "the mad fanaticism or ranting of the ultra 'Abolitionists' . . . has done far more harm than good to the very cause it professed to aid."¹¹ A man may still have "notions of liberty [without] setting at defiance all discretion, the settled laws of the land, the guaranteed power of citizens, and so on."¹²

The nineteenth century was a century of reforms. The tragedy is that these reforms at times got out of hand and brought vast calamities upon humanity. Moderation on the part of the abolitionists might have averted the Civil War. A degree of tractability on the part of the Russian radicals might have saved Russia from the hell of two revolutions and a civil war. At least Dostoyevsky and Whitman were of that opinion, and in agreement with them is Hawthorne, who condemned all fanaticism

as alienating the human heart, isolating it from the heart of the rest of humanity. Hawthorne's religious bigots who hang Quakers and witches in the name of Christianity are as dehumanized as the radicals in *The Possessed*. So are Hawthorne's nineteenth-century social reformers, Zenobia and Hollingsworth in *Blithedale Romance*, who are possessed by the monomania that prison reform will usher in the millennium. Hollingsworth and Zenobia do not murder people and set fire to towns; but Zenobia is a suicide, and both she and Hollingsworth poison the lives of most people who come within their sphere. But most serious—and it's exactly the accusation Dostoyevsky brings against the new men—is that in their zeal to help mankind they have come to despise mankind. "Do you despise or respect mankind, you, its coming saviours?" Dostoyevsky asked. Hollingsworth unquestionably despised it. "Mankind in Hollingsworth's opinion," thinks the narrator of *Blithedale Romance*, "is but another yoke of oxen, as stubborn, stupid, and sluggish. . . . He vituperates us aloud, and curses us in his heart, and will begin to prick us with the goadstick by and by. But are we his oxen? And what right has he to be our driver. . . ?"¹³ The violent reformer must of necessity hate mankind. Did he love them, he would be less eager to make them over into his own image at the expense perhaps of a hundred million of their lives.

Dostoyevsky angrily discards the radicals' concept of the new man as a hope for humanity, but he does not leave vacant the place occupied by him. He very carefully creates the image of a new human being who achieves happiness and beauty for all men by achieving happiness and beauty for himself first, but this new man is the diametric opposite of that molded by the rationalists. "The meek shall inherit the earth," says Jesus. Dostoyevsky takes this precept very seriously. The new man will be a meek man, not a rebel, nor a bully, nor a denier, nor a destroyer. The new man of the radicals is a self-willed man, the

opposite of the meek. Among Dostoyevsky's meek characters are Sonya in *Crime and Punishment*, Prince Myshkin in *The Idiot*, and Alyosha in *The Brothers Karamazov*. Dostoyevsky has been reviled by liberals and radicals the world over for his rejection of action in favor of passivity. Meekness is now out-of-date, as perhaps it has always been, especially in rationalist societies. The traditional Christian virtue of humility has been preserved, if at all, only in the Orthodox and Catholic churches and in several numerically small, but spiritually extremely important, Protestant "Peace Sects," like the Society of Friends. Meekness and the "Social Gospel" are incompatible.

Yet by meekness Dostoyevsky does not mean the supineness that his critics assume him to mean. Mere moral flaccidity he reserves for such liberal dreamers as Stepan Verhovensky, whom he holds in considerable contempt. His meek characters are always active and positive, not mere negations. They struggle without rest to help their fellow men, not to rebel but to achieve the joy of inner harmony, to release the redemptive energies of love within themselves—the most difficult and the most indispensable goal humanity can set itself. We have seen the influence exerted by Alyosha over the boys. We should remember also how Alyosha is a factor in leading Dmitri from self-willfulness to a regenerative love of humanity, and we should recall how quieting an influence his mere presence is to such tempestuous souls as Lise, Ivan, and the old Karamazov. Alyosha is the busiest character in the whole novel, a worker in every sense of the word. Similarly, Sonya's part in the spiritual rebirth of Raskolnikov and Prince Myshkin's struggle, even though ultimately unsuccessful, are examples of anything but sloth or passivity. People like these are absolutely necessary to humanity, in or out of novels, in all ages and all societies whether capitalist, communist, or democratic—they are the salt of the earth, selfless, devoted and joyous, and all except the completely lost respond to them

with love and long, in their deepest beings, to be like them in their joyous acceptance of life.

Dostoyevsky, like Whitman, has fashioned his new men and women out of rudimentary soul-stuff. Basic is a deep religiousness, as are a sense of the brotherhood of men and a feeling of oneness with the soil. The resemblance carries over into physical and mental characteristics. For example, Alyosha is "well-grown, red-cheeked, clear-eyed, radiant with health"¹⁴—a real brother of Whitman's ideal American. He is not overly intellectual, for Dostoyevsky writes approvingly: "He was always one of the best in the class but was never first."¹⁵ He stands in contrast to Ivan, who was always first in school but whose brilliant mind is described by Dmitri as "a tomb." For Alyosha has the gift of love and Ivan has not. "I never could understand how one can love one's neighbors,"¹⁶ says Ivan. Without love Ivan's mind becomes a tomb, a receptacle of dead things, for only in love is there life.

Alyosha was good-tempered, modest, and chaste. Most important of all, "he was fond of people; he seemed throughout his life to put implicit trust in people."¹⁷ Corollary to his trust in people was a trust in himself, a self-sufficiency or self-reliance that would gladden the heart of Whitman or Emerson. He shrank from no situation, always conducted himself with simplicity and frankness, and was unassailable in his religious convictions. As a result he was accepted by all and never knew a moment's insecurity. "Here is perhaps the one man in the world whom you might leave alone without a penny, in the center of an unknown city of a million inhabitants, and he would not come to harm . . . for he would be fed and sheltered at once . . . and to shelter him would not be a burden but would probably be looked upon as a pleasure."¹⁸

Prince Myshkin, an epileptic, lacks the health of Alyosha and hence deviates from the Whitman concept of the perfect human being. In fact, Dostoyevsky does not consider health

indispensable to spirituality; sickness in some of his characters, notably Myshkin, seems to enhance spiritual sensitivity. In other respects Myshkin with his unintellectuality, his love of people and his attraction of others' love closely resembles Alyosha. Indeed, were his health stronger he would undoubtedly have accomplished more, perhaps as much as Alyosha. It is significant that Dostoyevsky endowed the last of his meek characters "with radiant health."

Dostoyevsky's new women are less versatile than Whitman's. They may be prostitutes, like Sonya, but if so their aberration is the result of great compassion, like Sonya's willingness to sacrifice her chastity for the support of her impoverished family. Sexual passion is definitely not a motive for their way of life. Sonya, like the prostitute in *Notes from Underground*, is above all motherly—as, predominantly, are Whitman's model women. Also, Sonya is strong-willed, stronger than Raskolnikov, who, through her seemingly timid but actually insistent guidance, finds the way out of the hell his two murders have made of his inner life. Like Whitman, Dostoyevsky did not consider the "emancipated," intellectual girls of his time fit models for womanhood either present or future. Whitman would, however, unenthusiastically allow his women some activity outside the area of motherhood and housekeeping. "The day is coming when [women's place amid] practical life, politics, the suffrage, etc., will not only be argued all around us, but may be put to decision, and real experiment."¹⁹ The day had already come in Russia, and Dostoyevsky had burned himself on one of the products of the "experiment"—Polina Suslova, who became the model of all the Katerinas and Lizavetas, the self-willed, emancipated, "infernal" women of his novels.

The new American man or woman of Whitman was to be free of any connection with organized religion, though he was to be deeply religious: "Religion, although casually arrested, and,

after a fashion, preserv'd, in the churches and creeds, does not depend at all upon them, but is a part of the identified soul, which, when greatest, knows not bibles in the old way, but in new ways—the identified soul which can really confront religion when it extricates itself entirely from churches, and not before.”²⁰ Dostoyevsky would endorse the idea of the identified soul as being the regenerate, or reborn, and hence the “new,” soul. The “identity,” for Dostoyevsky as for Whitman, is a realization of oneness with God and humanity—a sense of one’s being in its most universal relationships. But for Dostoyevsky the indispensable religiousness of a regenerate humanity would not be divorced from the church. The difference between Whitman and Dostoyevsky here is broad and perhaps unbridgeable, though the end human results that each envisions are remarkably similar. The church, particularly the monastery, was to be the energizing point from which humanity would be regenerated. Father Zossima goes to great pains to describe how it is the function of Orthodox monks to preserve the image of Christ—the image of man’s perfectability as “sons of God”—till such time as the Russian masses will their own perfection. That time, he thinks, may not be far off. In the meanwhile, by the perfection of their own lives the monks will keep Christ alive and by so doing will preserve man from despair.

Dostoyevsky, like Whitman, assigned great importance and responsibility to literature in the spiritual growth of a nation. He regarded himself as a prophet, as we have seen; to Russia’s greatest poet, Pushkin, he paid a Whitmanesque tribute: “Had there been no Pushkin perhaps our faith in our Russian individuality, in our national strength, and our belief in our future independent mission in the family of the European nations, would not have manifested itself with so unyielding a force as it did later.”²¹ To find in the latter half of the nineteenth century similar faith in the power of poetry one must go to Whitman’s

Preface to *Leaves of Grass*. Yet, in Dostoyevsky's thinking, more important than the poet as leader was the supremely religious man, who by example and precept exerted over the people an influence equivalent to that of leader without ever assuming the role of leader. "Of old leaders of the people came from among us [the monks]," says Father Zossima, "and why should they not again? The same meek and humble ascetics will rise up and go out and work for the great cause. . . . The Russian monk has always been on the side of the people."²² Such men, who are admittedly rare, must act not merely in the *name* of religion, as did the Grand Inquisitor, who in the name of Christ led his followers to eternal death, but in deepest religious conviction. In this class of the supremely religious—that is, those whose whole lives and not simply their protestations are embodiments of religion—Dostoyevsky thought the monastic Elders (*startsi*) of the Orthodox Church pre-eminently belonged. Chosen for their saintliness in word and deed, they became spiritual leaders not only in their monasteries but, more importantly, in the world at large through their closeness to the people. For, like Whitman's poets, the Elders had to be in intimate rapport with the people, who for Whitman and for Dostoyevsky are vast untapped reservoirs of spiritual strength. Father Zossima in his youth traveled the length and breadth of Russia with the saintly, silent Father Anfim, an illiterate monk of the peasant class. This close contact with Holy Russia became a primary source of Father Zossima's own holiness, for "the peasant has God in his heart."²³ Thus the idea that the soil and the people are sources of spiritual strength is as basic to Dostoyevsky as to Whitman. Pilgrims were a common sight on the Russian highways; and the conviction was that these men, with the breadth and depth of their knowledge of the Russian land and its people, must be holy men. A fine example is Makar Ivanovitch in *Raw Youth*—Makar, who, after his wife had been violated by his master in the days of serfdom,

has spent his life wandering from one holy spot to another. In his old age, when he visits the son born of his wife's and master's union, he is as joyously seraphic as Father Zossima.

Of course the would-be leader, especially the intellectual, who is out of contact with the people is either outright harmful or doomed to ineffectiveness. "Those men of yours never loved the people," Shatov shouts to Stepan Trofimovitch, an ineffectual liberal of the 'forties. "They didn't suffer for them, and didn't sacrifice anything for them, though they may have amused themselves by imagining it. . . . You can't love what you don't know and they had no conception of the Russian people. All of them peered at the Russian people through their fingers. . . . And he who has no people has no God. You may be sure that all who cease to understand their own people and lose their connection with them at once lose to the same extent the faith of their fathers, and become atheistic or indifferent."²⁴ Shatov, of course, feels that the terrorists and nihilists of the 'sixties—about whom *The Possessed* is written—were among the most disastrously "segregated" from the people. Consequently, as Dostoyevsky did in his own life, Shatov repudiates his former revolutionary connections; he pays for the repudiation with his life.

The isolation of the intelligentsia from the people and hence from God is a constantly recurring theme in Dostoyevsky, as it was in much nineteenth-century writing. Intellectuals who had lost contact with the people and the soil were of course anathema to Whitman. In Hawthorne's *Ethan Brand*, the hero, Ethan Brand himself, whose interest in his fellow men is solely the "scientific" one of discovering among them "the unpardonable sin," pays for his objectivity by being orphaned from the Earth itself. "Oh, Mother Earth, who art no more my mother," he cries just before leaping to his death in a burning lime kiln. The price for the inability to love is hell, says Father Zossima. For Ethan it is hell as represented by his complete dehumaniza-

tion. After the kiln burns out, the attendant sees on the surface of the lime the outline in ashes of Ethan's skeleton and of his heart. Pride of intellect leads to destruction of oneself and of the fellow human beings with whom one has dealings. Dostoyevsky's revolutionaries in *The Possessed* are just such monomaniacs as Hawthorne's Ethan Brand or Dr. Rappaccini, or for that matter as Melville's Captain Ahab, whose passion to overcome evil leads to contempt for mankind and to the death of his crewmen.

For a time, as he read the installments of *Anna Karenina*, Dostoyevsky thought he had found in Levin a new type of Russian of whom he could unconditionally approve. Levin was new in upper-class Russia because he was a man of conscience more than of intellect. In his approach to the injustices arising from control of the land by large landowners, Levin did not rush to Europe in search of a panacea and return with the latest economic theory from England or Germany. Rather, after a brief and futile expedition to Europe, he searched his own heart and the hearts of the people. From working in the fields with the peasants, he came to the realization that he could work with them on the economic level as well. All he need do was to understand and to love and respect these people whom he hoped to better, and then follow the prompting of his own conscience. Unfortunately Dostoyevsky changed his opinion of Levin after reading the last installment of the novel. For Levin considered the Serbian War a bit of phoney empire-building completely alien to the aspirations of the common people of Russia. Dostoyevsky, who was at times a chauvinist, saw in the same war a crusade in which the Russian masses, following the deeper dictates of their souls, were selflessly going to the aid of their Slavic brethren against the infidel Turks. Dostoyevsky forthwith assigned Levin, and Tolstoy with him, to the company of segregated intellectuals, hopelessly and perversely out of touch with the people.

Yet if Dostoyevsky had not been blinded by war hysteria he might not have withdrawn his approval from this Levin who not only went to school to the peasants in problems of economics but who found in the peasant heart exactly that love of God and neighbor that Dostoyevsky found there—a discovery that saved Levin from suicide by renewing his sense of purpose in life. To both Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy, as to Whitman, the dearest dwelling place of God is the unsophisticated human heart.

VIII

THE NEW SOCIETY

A man is both an individual and a member. Instead of "individual" I shall use the word "person." His *personality* is unique and not to be violated; but he is equally created to be a *member* of society. When society is conceived as merely a sum of individuals, you get the chaos of liberal democracy. When the person is wholly subordinated to society, you get the dehumanization of fascism or communism. The extremes, however, may meet. For what liberal democracy really recognizes is a sum, not of persons but of individuals: that is to say, not the variety and uniqueness of persons, but the purely material individuation of the old-fashioned or Democritean atom. And this is a disrespect to the person. For the person is no longer a person if wholly isolated from the community; and the community is no longer a community if it does not consist of persons. A man is not himself unless he is a member; and he cannot be a member unless he is also something alone. Man's membership and his solitude must be taken together.

T. S. ELIOT

To Dostoyevsky and Whitman a new society must evolve from the souls of new men, and this is the only way the new society can arise. Man cannot be compelled to reform by a force exterior to himself. "Were communities so constituted," wrote Whitman, "that to prune their errors, the only thing necessary should be the passage of *laws*, the task of reform would be no

task at all. . . . You cannot legislate men into morality.”¹ And elsewhere he demands: “Let every man look to himself. Then society will take care of itself.”² Whitman, like Dostoyevsky, subscribed to the New Testament teaching concerning the presence of the kingdom of God in man. Utopia, the kingdom of God, the perfect society, exists within human souls in the form of love. It exists—and can exist—nowhere else and in no other form. Whitman has been described as a socialist at heart, but the word “heart” is the key. He was not one in his head. The comradeship, the brotherhood, inherent in the idea of socialism appealed to his heart. But the coercion, the exterior pressures upon the individual seemed less attractive to him. He himself made the distinction when he called himself an intrinsic, but not a technical, socialist. Canby has justly said that nothing could be more abhorrent to Whitman than the modern proletarian state with its total negation of the human will—the sole source of morality and virtue. It is not surprising to learn that in the opinion of at least one friend Whitman “was the most conservative of men. He believed in the old ways; had no faith in any ‘reform’ as such and thought that no change could be made in the condition of mankind except by the most gradual evolution. . . . He did not believe that woman’s suffrage would do any particular good. Anything like free love was utterly repugnant to his mind and he had no toleration for the Mormons. . . . He was very hostile to anything like anarchy, communism, and socialism. . . . For the abolitionists he had no sympathy. While opposed to slavery always, he thought that they considered the subject too all-important and were incendiary in their methods.”³ Whitman’s radicalism was of the heart, not the head; of the spirit, not of politics and economics. Yet his reputation as a political revolutionary is widespread. In Russia the Bolsheviks persistently regarded him as being on their side, and during the civil war some of his poems

were translated and distributed as morale builders among the Red troops.

Dostoyevsky's conservatism has never been questioned. In his youth he was a follower of the radical westernizer, Belinsky, but after his Siberian experiences his attitude underwent a complete reversal and he became a staunch supporter of the political *status quo*. In his thoughts about the human spirit, however, the Siberian imprisonment only deepened his radicalism. As with Whitman, it was just this newly conceived, revolutionary idea of humanity and its spiritual potential that made him hostile to shallowly conceived social panaceas. In a later analysis of the idol of his youth, Belinsky, Dostoyevsky makes his own attitude clear. "Treasuring above everything reason, science, and realism, at the same time he comprehended more keenly than anyone that reason, science, and realism can only produce an ant's nest and not social 'harmony' within which man can organize his life. He knew that moral principles are the basis of all things. He believed to the degree of delusion . . . in the moral foundations of socialism (which, however, up to the present revealed none but abominable perversions of nature and common sense). . . . Still, as a socialist he had to destroy Christianity in the first place. He knew that the revolution must necessarily begin with atheism. He had to dethrone that religion whence the moral foundations rejected by him had sprung up. Family, property, personal moral responsibility—these he denied radically. Doubtless, he understood that by denying moral responsibility of man, he thereby denied also his freedom, yet he believed with all his being that socialism not only does not destroy the freedom of man, but, on the contrary, restores it in a form of unheard-of majesty"4 Facing this dilemma in a way of which Belinsky was apparently incapable, Dostoyevsky rejected all purely reason-based reform on the grounds that it would cut off at its roots the basis of morality—the freedom of the human

will. Better, he thought, for man to have the choice between good and evil even if he chose evil, for without that possibility of evil there is no possibility of good. This is the point Dostoyevsky makes in the chapter on the Grand Inquisitor; man must have free choice to follow the Christ, the divinity within him. Society without faith in the existence of such a divinity, such a human potential, becomes a mere ant-hill.

Indeed Dostoyevsky believes that mankind so cherishes his free will that in an ant-heap society, where a rational code of morality was imposed on man by government, man would deliberately choose that which is irrational, even self-destruction, simply for the pleasure of exerting his will. In *Notes from Underground* the protagonist rejects, from sheer boredom, pure logic: the proposition that two plus two equal four, or, sociologically speaking, that what is for the greatest good for the greatest number of people is good for the individual. He finds that his need for free play of the will is satisfied by perversely believing that two plus two equal five and what is good for the majority is bad for the individual. He rejects the rationalist Utopias of the nineteenth century based on the proposition that man seeks his own happiness. Utilitarianism may satisfy the mind but not the will, which discovers fulfillment in perversity. The underground man, who is not respondent to reason, will never rest at peace with the greatest happiness for the greatest number. With a sneer on his face, he will rise up against the Utopia in which his will has been imprisoned and, like the twentieth-century "hood" vandalizing the palatial school that has been erected for his moral and intellectual welfare, will cry, "Come on, guys, let's do a job on this. Let's show them what we think of them." And in their boredom with logic, the "guys" will throw themselves wholeheartedly into the demolition of the structure that was to make them happy. Such destructiveness Dostoyevsky thinks inevitable in any society, no matter how

thoroughly reformed politically and economically, which denies God; for in denying God man erases all distinction between good and evil, and his will, which by his very nature he must exert, will be reduced to mere perversity and whim. "You say a rational attitude to humanity is to your own advantage, too," says the hero of *Raw Youth* in the course of a political argument; "but what if I think all these rational considerations irrational, and dislike all these socialist barracks and phalanxes? What the devil do I care for them or for the future when I shall live only once on earth! Allow me to judge my advantage for myself; it's more amusing. What does it matter to me what will happen in a thousand years to your humanity if, on your principles, I am to get for it neither love, nor future life, nor recognition of my heroism? No, if that's how it is I'd rather live in the most ignorant way for myself and let them all go to perdition."⁵

All that remains then is Shigalovism—the enforcement of happiness by killing a hundred million persons and constituting each individual a spy on every other—and even this will fail. Stripped of belief in God, man is stripped of a belief in himself, according to Dostoyevsky and Whitman. When that occurs, all the coercive imposition of moral codes and philosophies of life from without will be futile. To Dostoyevsky, reformers seem even more harmful potentially than they do to Whitman. Like Hawthorne he considers them, more often than not, to be madmen, devils, possessed—men who like Belinsky are rendered unresponsive to their better feelings by a fanatical attachment to one idea. Dostoyevsky's *The Possessed* is a record of frenzied activities of such monomaniacs: suicide, murder, arson—all in the name of humanitarianism. Always, in Dostoyevsky, these reformers are men of colossal pride. Having rejected God they assume the functions of God themselves. Without His help they attempt to create a heaven on earth; they will erect a new Tower of Babel. These are the new men-gods of whom the devil speaks

to Ivan Karamazov. But they will never complete this new Tower of Babel, Dostoyevsky believes, though the effort will cost a hundred million lives. In their new society brotherly love will supposedly compensate for the loss of God and the promise of heaven in another life. But as Dostoyevsky points out elsewhere, "to love one's neighbor from the standpoint of reason is unreasonable."⁶ Since the new society will be based on reason, love of one's neighbors would be a contradiction. Seeing the need for fraternity, "the frantic Socialist sets desperately to work on future fraternity, defining it, calculating its size and weight, enticing you with its advantages, explaining, teaching, telling of the profit each stands to gain from the fraternity and just how each will win. . . ."⁷ What results is of course not fraternity at all, for fraternity has its basis in the irrational soul of man and, according to Dostoyevsky, arises from his love of God, whose fatherhood alone makes believable the doctrine of the brotherhood of human beings. "In a word, if there is to be a foundation for brotherhood and love, there must be love. One must be drawn instinctively towards brotherhood, community, and harmony; one must be drawn despite the nation's age-old sufferings, despite the barbaric coarseness and ignorance. . . . The need for brotherly love must be in the nature of man, or else he must have assimilated the habit through the centuries."⁸

All societies that ignore these spiritual realities are doomed to failure. Social change must arise from the people. The leaders must be armed with a religious faith in the strength and basic goodness of the masses. Both Dostoyevsky and Whitman were possessed of such faith in their countries. "I wish that it may be understood," wrote Dostoyevsky, "that above all I am for the people; that I believe as in a sanctity in their soul, in their great forces, which no one among us knows in their full compass and grandeur."⁹ These could be the words of Whitman rhapsodizing on the American masses. The conviction is no less frequently

reiterated in Dostoyevsky, perhaps its most eloquent expression coming from the lips of Father Zossima: "One who does not believe in God will not believe in God's people. He who believes in God's people will see His Holiness too, even though he had not believed it till then. Only the people and their future spiritual power will convert our atheists, who have torn themselves away from their native soil."¹⁰

To Dostoyevsky the strength of the people lay in their Orthodoxy, of which their souls were living tabernacles. Before Peter the Great, Russian theologians had built up the theory that Orthodoxy and the Russian people were to lead the world into holiness. Moscow was the "third Rome," the final depository of "pure" Christianity (after Rome and Constantinople) before the end of the world. From this concept developed a belief in Russia's Messianic role which, in wholly different and more dangerous garb, is still a driving force behind Russian-sponsored world communism. But in his generation, Dostoyevsky felt that Russia, under the leadership of Westernizing intellectuals out of contact with the soil and the peasantry, had forgotten its Messiahship and must be vigorously reminded of it. The revitalizing energy would come from the people: "The salvation of Russia comes from the people . . . an unbelieving reformer will never do anything in Russia, even if he is sincere in heart and a genius. Remember that. The people will meet the atheist and overcome him, and Russia will be one and Orthodox. Take care of the peasant and guard his heart. Go on educating him quietly . . . for the peasant has God in his heart."¹¹

Whitman's is a no less ardent faith in the people, equally imbued with a sense of the divine sanction of man's presence on earth, though not in the context of a formal, organized religion like Orthodoxy. "Grand common stock!" he exults in *Democratic Vistas*, "To me the accomplish'd and convincing growth, prophetic of the future. Proof undeniable to sharpest

sense, of perfect beauty, tenderness and pluck Let no tongue ever speak in disparagement of the American races, north or south, to one who has been through the war in the great army hospitals."¹² The people, this "grand common stock," is the rock-bottom fact of the nation. It is "too sluggish maybe, but ever holding decision and decrees in hand . . . and at times indeed summarily crushing to atoms the mightiest parties, even in the hour of their pride."¹³ Back of all the upheavals, all the fanfare and turmoil and "rapid shifting" of the political life of the nation, "the people remain."

That the people had faults both Dostoyevsky and Whitman admit. Father Zossima deplors the drunkenness, greed, money-lending, selfishness, vile language among the peasants. And in America Whitman finds the people too often ignorant, crude, credulous, unfit, uncouth, materialistic. Yet neither author despairs. In Russia the peasants, Dostoyevsky believes, are aware of their evil-doing, know they sin against God, and, having faith in God, will mend their ways under the proper guidance. In America Whitman is sure that the people will improve themselves—the impulse is there. In all people are latent an "aspiration for independence, and a pride, and self-respect,"¹⁴ which need only to be given free scope in order to flourish. The free scope will come with man's realization of his own infinitude, as Emerson called it, which in turn will produce governments and social conditions more favorable to the development of character.

In the societies of their respective countries Whitman and Dostoyevsky find much to deplore, just as they do in the morality of individuals. In *Democratic Vistas* Whitman describes at length the shortcomings of governmental and business morality during the presidency of Grant, not to mention the general mores and habits of mind of the people, especially the wealthy and fashionable. "The depravity of the business classes of our

country is not less than has been supposed, but infinitely greater. The official services of America, national, state, and municipal, in all their branches and departments, except the judiciary, are saturated in corruption, bribery, falsehood, maladministration; and the judiciary is tainted. The great cities reek with respectable as much as nonrespectable scoundrelism. In fashionable life, flippancy, tepid amours, weak infidelism, small aims, or no aims at all, only to kill time. In business (that all devouring modern word business) the sole object is, by any means, pecuniary gain."¹⁵ The spectacle is indeed appalling, and familiar to our century as well as to the nineteenth, and at the basis of it all is the "weak infidelism"—a superciliousness, a hypocrisy, a lack of belief in humanity itself. The other failings are by-products of this spiritual atrophy.

Dostoyevsky is less outspoken concerning the corruption of Russian official life, though he was aware of it—as is evidenced in *Memoirs from the House of the Dead*—and wrote of it perhaps as much as he dared. But against the "weak infidelism" of the Russian intelligentsia he was able safely to speak his mind. A diatribe from the mouth of Shatov in *The Possessed* is on a vituperative level with Whitman when most lustily playing the part of Jeremiah: "What are the men I've broken with? The foes of all true life, out-of-date Liberals afraid of their own independence, the flunkies of thought, the enemies of all freedom and personality, the decadent advocates of death and rottenness. All they have to offer is senility, glorious mediocrity of the most bourgeois kind, contemptible shallowness . . ."¹⁶ Elsewhere in *The Possessed* is the remark: "'The higher liberalism' and the 'higher liberal,' that is, a liberal without any definite aim, is only possible in Russia."¹⁷ Whitman would have added—"and in the United States." For "weak infidelism" and "higher liberalism" seem to have been one and the same thing.

In both America and Russia, according to Dostoyevsky and

Whitman, the great obstacle to spiritual flowering was exactly this "flunkeyism of thought" that Shatov finds characteristic of Liberalism. And "flunkeyism of thought" to both authors was imitation of Europe in both its bourgeois and feudal aspects. Both deplored the obliteration of the native genius by overcoatings of "culture" and "delicatesse" (Whitman's words) and by "civilization" (Dostoyevsky's word) from Europe. To both Europe was a "precious graveyard,"¹⁸ as Ivan Karamazov called it, in which are interred the old passionate faiths—in truth, science, work—of a civilization that is dead in comparison with the two huge nations to the east and west. The truly original contributions that America and Russia had to offer could be overlooked in both nations' too deep attachment to this decadent European culture. To Dostoyevsky it was time that the Westernization initiated in Russia by Peter the Great be brought to a halt; Russia, however much she may have benefited by contact with the West, was now ready to make her own great and unique impression on history. To Whitman, America must cast off the last cords of Colonialism that were hampering her intellectual and artistic life and, perfectly free, strike on toward her own New World destiny. The uniqueness of each nation would show itself in all the manifestations that comprise a culture, but Dostoyevsky and Whitman were particularly emphatic about the need of a purely national literature. Dostoyevsky thought such a literature had already sprung up in Russia. The first great representative national had appeared in Pushkin, and *Anna Karenina* (excepting its last section) was a monument of the Russian spirit that could hold its own with any European masterpiece. In Whitman's opinion the great American priest-poet was yet to come. Meanwhile, to him, it was a living disgrace that American literature still aped the European "feudal" and "haut ton" models.

The possible contribution that Dostoyevsky and Whitman

saw, each for his own nation, would be of course a complete new culture—a huge forward stride in man's spiritual evolution. In their ideas about government they were poles apart. Dostoyevsky was a supporter of the Czar and the established Orthodox Church—both of which were horrifying to Whitman, the prophet of democracy. To Dostoyevsky American democracy, like European, was based on greed and materialism. It is while being “exploited” in America that Shatov in *The Possessed* awakes to the beauties and significance of the Russian soul, and when he returns he is an enemy of all Westernizing influences in Russia. Even in Poe, whose work he otherwise admired, Dostoyevsky finds the fantasy to be “material,” whatever he means by that, and thus typically American.

The strictures of each against the other's country were not without basis: Russia was a despotism in which the people were bestialized, and America was deplorably materialistic. We have seen that neither was blind to the evils in his own nation. But the two authors travel parallel roads again when they define the goal that their peoples and governments should set themselves. This goal, of each, is the creation of a society in which there would be a full flourishing of the individual in his relations to God and to his fellow men. In all his thought, Dostoyevsky asserted, the unviolated dignity of the individual was the starting and the ending point. And Whitman saw “underneath the fluctuations of the expressions of society . . . this image of completeness in separatism of individual dignity.”¹⁹ But though the fostering of individual freedom and inviolability was the basic aim of each society, the concept of “rugged individualism” as it carries over from laissez-faire economic freedom into personal morality was repugnant to both. Any freedom that separates the individual from the rest of humanity is a faulty and incomplete freedom. The fierce competitive acquisitiveness that was mistaken for freedom in many of the liberal democracies tends to

isolate the individual. Both Whitman and Dostoyevsky considered "each to be responsible to all for all." In this involvement of each with all lies the chief dignity of man.

We have seen that Dostoyevsky considered the isolation of the intellectual from the masses, one of the major tragedies of the Russia of his day. This "sin of the intellect" was only one type of irresponsible individualism that he deplored. Another was the bourgeois spirit of self-aggrandizement which he saw growing in all people, especially in the West, as a result of the popular philosophies of the time, such as social Darwinism, which projected the theory of the survival of the fittest into the economic affairs of man as an excuse for ruthless business practices. Modern man in general, not only the intellectual, was becoming isolated, atomized, to use T. S. Eliot's expression. Says Father Zossima: "All mankind in our age have split up into units, they all keep apart . . . [man] heaps up riches by himself and thinks 'How strong I am and how secure,' and in his madness he does not understand that the more he heaps up the more he sinks into self-destructive impotence. For he is accustomed to rely on himself alone and to cut himself off from the whole; he has trained himself not to believe in the help of others, in men and humanity, and only trembles for fear he should lose his money and the privileges he has won for himself. Everywhere in these days men have in their mockery ceased to understand that true security is to be found in general human solidarity rather than in isolated individual effort. But this terrible individualism must inevitably have an end, and all will suddenly understand how unnaturally they are separated from one another."²⁰ This "terrible individualism" Dostoyevsky saw as an infection spreading into Russia from the West. Its most malignant characteristic he defined as a notion of equality based solely on material needs. "You have needs and so satisfy them, for you have the same rights as the most rich and the most noble. Don't be afraid of satisfying

them and even multiplying your desires.”²¹ This, he says, is the modern notion of freedom, but actually it is an enslavement—an enslavement to things, to the body and its lusts. “In the rich, isolation and spiritual suicide; in the poor, envy and murder.” An example of this slavery to one’s “multiplied desires” is a revolutionary cited by Father Zossima. This champion of liberty, while in prison, feels so strongly the deprivation of tobacco that he is ready to betray his cause to satisfy his craving. Contrary to the claims that material prosperity and more equitable distribution of goods will lead to greater unity, the result is actually greater disunity, so that in the end the envious poor will drink blood.

What is the answer? Brotherhood of man, which will be the distinctive Russian contribution, by example, for in Russia this brotherhood will be realized first and the rest of the world will follow. But before brotherhood can prevail even in Russia, each individual must feel himself a brother to every other human being. No sociology, no reform can induce this feeling of brotherhood. It must arise from the divinely oriented inner core of being where all good actions, all love, have their origin. Any influence that tended to inhibit the free action of love, which Dostoyevsky considered natural to man, was equally abhorrent to Dostoyevsky and Whitman, whether it was the materialism of capitalism or of communism.

Dostoyevsky quoted the biblical paradox to explain his concept of individualism: “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die it brings forth much fruit.” (John 12:24) A detailed elucidation of this text appears in *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions*, a work in which Dostoyevsky gives his reactions to the social institutions of the West. He states that in the West acquisitive individualism was too deeply ingrained ever to permit man there to achieve the brotherhood that was the end product of socialism. Russia

he thought had a better chance, though socialism, with its rejection of the spirit, was definitely not the way. He then asks: "Must one be without personality to be happy?" His answer is in the negative: "A person must not only lose his personality, but actually attain a much greater degree of individuality than now exists in the West. Understand me: voluntary, fully conscious self-sacrifice utterly free of outside constraint, sacrifice of one's entire self for the benefit of all, is in my opinion a sign of the supreme development of individuality, of its supreme power, absolute self-mastery and freedom of will . . .'"²² No less an individualism than this will suit Dostoyevsky and he believes that the "resurrected" Russian people under the guidance of Orthodoxy, that is, the purest Christianity, will realize this ideal.

In the United States Whitman's originality, in dealing with the problem of the individual's relation to society, was shown in his believing, like Dostoyevsky, that the highest flowering of individuality would bloom from a soil of social solidarity. In this respect he counteracted a weakness in most of his contemporaries among American authors, especially the Transcendentalists, who played down the individual's role as a member of society. Despite its vision of the ennoblement of the human soul, Emerson's essay "Self-Reliance" savors of spiritual and intellectual pride in its tendency to build barriers between the self-sufficient person and his dependent, conforming fellows. Thoreau's *Walden* errs more in this respect in that it advocates an even more lonely self-sufficiency than that of Emerson. Both of the great Concordians attempted to tighten the bonds between man and God without strengthening those between man and man. Critical of this insularity were Melville and Hawthorne, who drew their would-be totally self-sufficient heroes, like Ethan Brand and Captain Ahab, as monsters of pride doomed to ultimate tragic failure. Whitman, however, attempted to define the

very delicate threads that bind the individual in his relations with his fellow men.

To Whitman, as to Dostoyevsky, material equality, the satisfaction of the physical wants of all beyond the necessities, was in no sense a true equality or true freedom and was not conducive to healthy individuality. Rather, in the freedom to seek one's own material gain Whitman saw a strong possibility of the stunting of the personality through the soul's enslavement to things. He vigorously deplores "the abandonment of such a great being as a man to the toss and pallor of years of money-making with all their scorching days and icy nights and all their stifling deceptions and underhanded dodgings . . ." He recommends that the American be content with the "independence of a little sum laid aside for burial money, and of a few clapboards around and shingles overhead on a lot of American soil owned, and the easy dollars that supply the year's plain clothing and meals."²³

America, Whitman felt, had gone successfully through two stages of three necessary for the achievement of a supreme democratic society. One of these was the establishment of an effective form of government, and this had been accomplished by the Constitutional Convention in the last century. The other was the building of a strong economy—in other words, of a firm material basis for the new society; and this he thought his own century had more than adequately accomplished. But the third and most important stage still lay in the future. This was the flowering of the spiritual life of "a sublime and serious Religious Democracy" which would find its "expression spirit" in a new native literature and other arts and in American personalities. The test of any civilization is the quality of the individual who lives in it. We have already seen what manner of man Whitman thought the true American should be. In his social context Whitman's new individual was no more an isolate than was Dostoyevsky's. "This idea of perfect individualism it is indeed

that deepest tinges and gives character to the idea of the aggregate. For it is mainly or altogether to serve independent separatism that we favor a strong generalization, consolidation . . . man, properly train'd in sanest, highest freedom, may and must become a law, and series of laws, unto himself, surrounding and providing for, not only his own personal control, but all his relations to other individuals. . . . The common ambition strains for elevations, to become some privileged exclusive. The master sees greatness and health in being part of the mass; nothing will do as well as common ground. Would you have in yourself the divine, vast, general law? Then merge yourself in it The liberalist of today has this advantage over antique or medieval times, that his doctrine seeks not only to individualize but to universalize. The great word Solidarity has arisen."²⁴ The mere possession of the franchise is not important, says Whitman (as would Dostoyevsky), but to "an enfranchised man" it is important. It means essentially what Christ, according to the Grand Inquisitor, demanded of his followers: the free choice between good and evil, the acceptance or rejection of God. Democracy is "life's gymnasium" in which all men may exercise their moral muscles in the choice between good and evil, the selfish and the unselfish. Often enough the people make the wrong, the selfish choice. But the promise is there; the opportunity is there. And this is the promise of exactly that voluntary self-sacrifice for others without hope of personal gain that Dostoyevsky described as the culmination of perfect individualism.

Whitman was convinced that the American people were capable of attaining these heights of selflessness in which the noblest individualism is found. Once again he reverts to the great experience in his life, his work in the Civil War hospitals. It was from what he learned in those scenes, he writes, that he wrote *Democratic Vistas*, the book in which he develops most explicitly his faith in the future of the American people. During

those four years he observed "the people of *their own choice* [*italics mine*] fighting, dying for their own idea," that is, for the idea of the Union, whose preservation they considered essential for the welfare of America and indeed the whole world. "With alacrity," these American, "the peaceablest in the world," submitted themselves to the indignities of army life, the horrors of battle, the tortures of "the wounds, the amputation, the shattered face or limb," and the ultimate agony of death "without cowardice or qualms of terror."²⁵ In this selflessness Whitman found the highest development of self.

In *Democratic Vistas* Whitman frequently speaks of the American *idea*, and Dostoyevsky in *Diary of a Writer* no less often refers to the Russian *idea*. What each means is that peculiar essence of the national spirit which makes for distinctive nationality and which, more importantly, will be the nation's ultimate gift to history. To Dostoyevsky the Russian idea—which really was two ideas merged in one—found its first expression in the writing of Pushkin, whose importance he emphasizes over and over again, not only in his famous "Pushkin Address" but throughout *The Diary of a Writer*. "In Pushkin there are two principal or guiding ideas, and both comprise the symbol of the future character, of the whole mission of Russia, and, therefore,—of our whole future destiny. The first idea is the *universality* of Russia, her responsiveness and actual, unquestioned kinship with the geniuses of all ages and nations of the world. This thought . . . was *actually* fulfilled by [Pushkin], embodied forever in his ingenious creations He was a man of the ancient world; he was a German; he was an Englishman, . . . and he was also the poet of the East. He said and proclaimed to all these peoples that Russian genius knew them, . . . that, as a kinsman, it could fully *reincarnate* itself in them; that universality was given only to the Russian spirit—the future mission to comprehend and to unite all the different nationalities, eliminatng all

their contradictions.”²⁶ To the intellectuals in Dostoyevsky’s novels Europe is often dearer than their native land, just as it is to many American expatriates, like T. S. Eliot and Henry James. Insofar as this allegiance to Europe was accompanied by alienation from, and contempt for, Russia, Dostoyevsky did not approve. But insofar as it was a manifestation of universality and all-sympathy he finally came to regard it as typically and healthily Russian. “Only Russia lives not for herself, but for an idea, and you must admit . . . the remarkable fact that for almost the last hundred years Russia has lived . . . only for the other States of Europe! And what of them! They are doomed to pass through fearful agonies before they attain the kingdom of God.”²⁷

Whitman’s image of America and her destiny was startlingly similar to Dostoyevsky’s of Russia. America, like Russia, is a land “tolerating all, accepting all.”²⁸ America honors the best of other nations, but she is destined to lead them onward to a new and higher civilization—“Ensemble, Evolution, Freedom.” The nation is like a ship sailing into unknown seas, freighted with the present and the past—

Thou holdest not the venture of thyself alone, not of the Western
continent alone,
Earth’s *résumé* floats on thy keel O ship, is steadied by thy spars,
With thee time voyages in trust, the antecedent nations sink or
swim with thee,
With all their ancient struggles, martyrs, heroes, epics, wars, thou
bear’st the other continents,
Theirs, theirs as much as thine, the destination-port triumphant;
Steer them with good strong hand and wary eye O helmsman, thou
carriest great companions,
Venerable priestly Asia sails this day with thee,
And royal feudal Europe sails with thee.²⁹

As Dostoyevsky wrote of the Russian idea, and impregnated his novels with it, Whitman sang the American idea. Both ideas were the same: universality and brotherhood drawing their strength from the people and spreading outward to engulf the world in fraternity. And each idea is firmly rooted in religion—is in fact a religion in itself. Whitman insists that mankind's problems are not only social but, more basically, religious as well. The new America envisaged in *Democratic Vistas* will be fired by the idea that "the personality of mortal life is most important with reference to the immortal."³⁰ The sense of the national destiny as a divine mission—a Messiahship—will be all-engrossing if and when the nation makes its final leap into the spiritual stage—a leap which it must make if it is to survive.

Similarly, in *The Possessed* Shatov says: "Not a single nation has ever been founded on principles of science and reason." Nations, he goes on to say in words reminiscent of Pasternak's remarks on history, are built up by "the force of the persistent assertions of one's own existence, and a denial of death. It's the spirit of life, as the Scriptures call it, 'the river of living water' God is the synthetic personality of the whole people, taken from its beginning to its end. . . . It's a sign of the decay of nations when they begin to have gods in common. . . . The stronger the people the more individual their God." When accused of reducing God "to the attribute of nationality," Shatov indignantly answers: "On the contrary, I raise the people to God. . . . The people is the body of God. Every people is only a people so long as it has its own and excludes all other gods on earth" Shatov's own belief crescendoes to fanaticism: "I believe in Russia. . . . I believe in her Orthodoxy. . . . I believe in the body of Christ. . . . I believe that the new advent will take place in Russia. . . . I believe . . ."³¹

Such ardor can easily flare up into racism and war mongering, as it did to a certain extent in Dostoyevsky and in Whitman.

Though in the main Dostoyevsky envisages Russia's Messiahship as a spiritual one to be furthered by example rather than the sword, he was a fervent pan-Slav, at times an objectionable jingoist ready to support, on idealist grounds, any imperialist venture the Czar embroiled himself in. Thus, while to Tolstoy the Balkan War was an ignoble grab for power, a political push toward the Dardenelles, to Dostoyevsky it was a holy war of Orthodox Slavs against the infidels—which was exactly what the government wished the people to believe. The nations of Western Europe—so dear to the all-humanitarian Russian heart, were suddenly seen as malignant and diabolic schemers when they in any way thwarted Russian expansion. Balked continuously in the West, Russia must look to the East, to Asia, where military victories were the rule of the day. In that direction, Dostoyevsky concluded, Russia's manifest destiny lay.

Such imperialism even when it springs from sincerely held, spiritually benign motives, is dangerous. In the nineteenth century it paraded under many guises—for example, the White Man's Burden and *Der Drang nach Osten*. Today it exists in Russia as World Communism. Perhaps Dostoyevsky was correct. Any spiritually strong nation must have a religious faith in its own destiny and institutions and in the rightness of these for all mankind. Certainly Russia and the United States are possessed today by that conviction. And ironically the aims, on the theoretical level at least, are pretty much the same: the establishment of universal peace based on the brotherhood of man. This is perhaps the spiritual aim of all dynamic nationalism. But the means differ, as they did in the thought of Dostoyevsky and Whitman, and do today to a much greater degree in Russian Communism and American Democracy. Yet we must never forget that the similar aims are there—a possible common ground—and that they had their seedtime in the nineteenth century in

the spiritual fervor of such spiritual leaders as Dostoyevsky and Whitman.

"Manifest destiny" as an ideological weapon of imperialism was the American equivalent of pan-Slavism in Whitman's time. And jumping on the band wagon of Manifest Destiny, Whitman could be as offensively jingoistic as Dostoyevsky. He assumed as inevitable the absorption of Canada and all of Latin America into "these States." He was as blind concerning the Mexican War as Dostoyevsky was about the Balkan War. "What," he asks, "has miserable inefficient Mexico . . . to do with the great mission of peopling the world with a noble race?"³² That mission was reserved for the United States, on whose increase in territory Whitman looked "with the faith that the Christian has in God's mysteries."³³

These emotional lapses are frequent but not altogether typical of Dostoyevsky and Whitman. Both were keenly and continuously aware of the weaknesses of their countries. The fulfillment of their missions lay in the future, both insisted. The present was deplorable and the time for change was running out. Dostoyevsky had misgivings lest the Russian God had been drowned in cheap vodka in his chief dwelling place, the soul of the mouzhik. And Whitman asserted that never before in the United States had there been so much "hollowness of heart." Nor did either one regard the future greatness of his nation to be assured. Whitman's sobering assessment is: "The United States are destined either to surmount the gorgeous history of feudalism, or else prove the most tremendous failure of time."³⁴ He does not find evident anywhere in America as yet "a great moral and religious civilization—the only justification of a great material one."³⁵ Dostoyevsky's most dramatic warning of the possible ruin of Russia is his famous passage on the galloping troika in *The Brothers Karamazov*. Russia dashes blindly, madly on her headlong way, tramping underfoot her traditions, her institutions,

her spiritual bulwarks, while the nations of the world stand aghast and in their fear join forces to stop the runaway.

But an optimistic, unshakable confidence in the future roles of their countries was the normal frame of mind of these authors. For mankind in general they insisted the future held great glories and happiness. They shared the dream of Dostoyevsky's Ridiculous Man, and like him would not give up their faith in man's ultimate perfection. And they shared Stepan Verhovensky's view in *The Possessed*: "What is far more essential for man than personal happiness is to know and to believe at every instant that there is somewhere a perfect and serene happiness for all men and for everything."³⁶

IX

CONCLUSION

How would Dostoyevsky and Whitman feel about our own mid-twentieth century? Would they discern the realization of their hope for a world society based on brotherly love freely given one man to another? The answer is obvious. Hate, rather than love, is even more the rule of politics, both national and international, than ever before. Political systems in Europe—fascism, nazism, communism have stood or fallen on the intensity of hate they can generate in their peoples. In the so-called democracies, while hate is perhaps less cynically employed, it is still a potent weapon in winning elections and furthering the ambitions of military cliques. The two major parties in America vie in the intensity of the anger they can display against Russia and in the quantity and deadliness of the weapons they promise to stockpile against the day we come to grips with the hated enemy. Meanwhile Russia fans her own anger and heaps up her own stockpile of death. "Balance of terror" has become a respectable phrase for an accepted foreign policy, and where there is terror there is hate.

As for the release of love, that most potent of social forces

according to Dostoyevsky and Whitman, the amounts are too pitifully small, even among allies, to mention. Are Dostoyevsky and Whitman wrong? Is hate a more potent, constructive political tool than love? Obviously the governments of the world are staking their chances on hate, and the advocate of love, anywhere, is liable to find himself behind prison walls.

Within nations the picture may not be so gloomy. In the United States, despite the presence of race hatred in some segments both North and South, there are very definite signs that even this problem will be solved by good will and brotherhood. The States on the whole do seem welded in that fraternal unity of which Whitman so fondly dreamed. Similarly in the Soviet Union, despite the wishful thinking of many Americans, there does not seem to be any serious disunity, though this may be partly the result of fear rather than freely generated feelings of comradeship. Less favorable from the points of view of Whitman and Dostoyevsky is the increasing emphasis in each country upon material progress at the expense of spiritual growth. Whitman's third state of a nation's development, spiritual flowering, is still as far in the future, apparently, in America as it was in his day. In place of a population of "identified souls" we are a nation of "organization men." Greed, conformity, intellectual timidity, dullness of conscience, venality, corruption—indeed all the evils of the Grant era that Whitman fulminated against in *Democratic Vistas* are present to an exaggerated degree. As for Russia, materialism is even more rampant there than in the United States, the official doctrine being that tractors, dynamos, and sewer pipes are all that are needed to create the terrestrial paradise. Conformity is of course enforced by law and the security police, and political corruption takes the form of a life-and-death struggle for power in which the victor exterminates his rivals.

The great indigenous national literatures that Dostoyevsky and Whitman hoped for, and which existed in both countries

briefly during and right after their times, are conspicuously absent from the national scenes. America since the nineteen-thirties has lapsed back into an aping of Europe. Serious attention is given to such nebulous nothingnesses as existentialism, a philosophy that no one has thus far been able to define intelligibly, mainly because it is without substance. In literature the pretentious obscurities of Joyce, James, and Pound—Europeans or Europeanized Americans (the most ultra of Europeans)—provide the models for our so-called serious literature. On a popular level we have on television, in the movies, and in the drugstore paperbacks an incredible flow of sex, sadism, and other forms of sensationalism interspersed with hypocritical and self-conscious lip service to the morality that every true American, regardless of his insatiable lust for televised murders and sexual aberration, supposedly lives by. The intelligentsia, as represented by the writers and artists, seems even more segregated than ever, having withdrawn behind the iron curtain of unintelligibility and, like James and Pound, orienting themselves toward Europe rather than their native soil. Art for art's sake, or for Freud's sake, or Aristotle's, Marx's, or Sartre's sake is the rule of the day. Art for the people's sake is extinct; and if it were not, it would find no publisher or patron. The great audiences that Whitman dreamed of for his great poet-priests have failed to be born either among the intellectuals or the people.

As for the Soviet Union, one need not dwell upon the decline of literature under censor-enforced conformity. Yet degraded as Soviet literature is as art, it is scarcely so degraded in theme as the pollutions offered to the American populace. Heroes of labor and the Red Army who give their lives to what the Russians conceive of as the service of humanity, are an improvement, however wooden and sheeplike they may be, over the homicidal cowboys, drug-crazed gangsters, and nymphomaniac

hoydens of the American movie and TV screens and of pulp pornography that proudly advertises itself as "making *Peyton Place* read like a book of hymns." If, as Whitman thought, the literature of a nation is to present in outline the blueprint of the national character, then we can only pray that American literature of the 'forties and 'fifties will prove one of the great failures of all time. With our American authors the degradation of the human being seems to be the chief aim. In Russia the stunting of him, without actual moral turpitude, has become the function of officially approved literature. In neither case does man appear as a recognizable image of God endowed with freedom to choose between good and evil, for whatever "philosophy" there is in the literature of each country—on any level of sophistication—is essentially a determinism that strips the individual of control over his own life and actions and has replaced free will with psychological complexes, economic forces, and glandular secretions. Whether one murders one's father is no longer a matter of choice; patricide will be decided subconsciously by our psyche, our environment, and our biochemistry. The intake of vitamin B in proper quantities is thus much more important in determining our conduct than is the reading of Scripture.

Yet there are intermittent signs, in the United States at least, that the people are not altogether satisfied with their diminishment to the status of animals. Some of these signs are perversions, like the rebelliousness of Dostoyevsky's *Underground Man* against enforced happiness. One such perversion is the so-called "beat generation" attitude, one spokesman for which excused gang killings ("for kicks") as expressions of free will in a society where most decisions had been removed from the responsibility of the individual. The murderers, this apologist writes, are asserting their own humanity as self-determining beings. They scorn the attempts of society to maintain them as "millions

of happy babes" in palatial schools and luxurious housing projects, because the price they pay for these advantages is their most vital human privilege, that of making their own choices as to how they want to live and what they want to do. To some extent this theory is correct. It is amply clear by now that slum clearance and new school buildings are no more the answer to the crime problem than was prohibition to the problem of drinking. One cannot legislate contentment any more than one can legislate morality. Yet in order to assert their free wills the "beatniks" need not so invariably make the *wrong* choices. Murder is a poor way to express one's humanity. An irony is that these devotees of excess, from sex and alcohol to morphine and homicide, have adopted Whitman as one of their patron saints. It would be difficult to think of any other author who would be more repelled by the sterile obscenities both of their habits of life and of the pseudoliterature that has arisen like a fungus on the movement. However, few take the beatniks seriously, and their only significance is that they exhibit the continued vitality, however perverted, of the human will in an era when man is generally regarded as an automaton.

There are, however, indications of a more wholesome re-awakening of mankind, in the West at least, to its position as something other than a soulless mechanism. Current literature, to be sure, either is so esoteric as to be meaningful only to a small coterie of academic esthetes or is so prurient in content that its intellectual and spiritual impacts are nil. Yet among the paperbacks many older philosophical and literary works have been reprinted to sell at prices within the reach of all, and these volumes are selling well. In the main, these are books that uphold the status of man as a spiritual as well as a material being. Many are mystical or theological works, studies in the wondrous possibilities of man's life in relation to God and to other men. Among them are books by and about Dostoyevsky

and Whitman, both of whose points of view are the subjects of renewed and keen interest in a world in which

Things are in the saddle
And ride mankind.

Akin to the renewal of interest in the older humanistic work is the phenomenal success outside Russia of Boris Pasternak's *Dr. Zhivago*. The record-breaking sales of this book in the United States, for example, cannot be attributed entirely to the appeal of Pasternak's condemnation of communism. We suspect that many, if not a majority, of the hundreds of thousands of readers of *Dr. Zhivago* derived from the novel a deepened respect for the human species rather than a sharpened hatred of Russia. Further, the millions who didn't read the book itself did read comments on it and excerpts from it in the daily and periodical press, and these comments and quotations were not by any means elucidative only of the anticommunist aspects of the book. Most of the articles tended to prepare the reader for a great work of literature rather than a great work of propaganda. Thus *Time* congratulated Pasternak on leading Russian literature back to the themes that had once made it the admiration of the world—the themes of death and resurrection—and pointed out the irony that the most Christian novel of our generation had been written by a Jewish citizen of an officially atheistic country. The *New Yorker* published a brilliant and lengthy review by Edmund Wilson, who placed the novel among the greatest of all time and pointed out that it had as much to say to materialistic, organization-minded Americans as to the robots of the Soviet proletariat. Even more eloquent was Miss Dorothy Thompson's thoughtful article, "The Russian Poet Prophets," in *The Ladies Home Journal*, in which the author points out the parallels between *Dr. Zhivago* and the works of Dostoyevsky. Some of Miss Thompson's remarks are well worth repeating.

Dr. Zhivago is a rejection of the wholesale sociopolitical organization of man, including his very soul. . . . It is a rejection of the concept that man and society can be creatively transformed by any ideology . . . except [by] man's inner transformation, through faith, friendship, mutual aid, and love, in a true organic community imbued with grace. . . . Pasternak believes this transformation will take place. . . . Pasternak, *like all the greatest Russian writers* [italics Miss Thompson's], comes by way of doubt and skepticism to what T. S. Eliot has called "the idea of a Christian society"—not a Christian society measured by church attendance and adherence to formal dogma or ritual. "Salvation lies not in loyalty to forms but in throwing them off." It is loyalty to the spirit which redeems. The greatest transformer of man and society, acknowledged by Pasternak, was born in Galilee and brought the world the most liberating concept ever enunciated, that man, though sinful, can through penitence win forgiveness and redemption, and through love achieve harmony and peace. . . .

Quoting Father Zossima, Miss Thompson continues:

"To create the world afresh man must turn into another path psychologically. Until you have become really, in actual fact, a brother to everyone, brotherhood will never come to pass. No sort of scientific teaching, no kind of common interest, will ever persuade man to share property and privilege with equal consideration for all." . . . [Dostoyevsky] saw no essential difference between the fatal materialistic spirit of the liberal-capitalist drive for self-enrichment and the fatal materialism of communism. . . . But Dostoyevsky, too, had faith, the faith that Pasternak shares. The older Russian believed with passion that the guiding force that eventually will lead man to renewal and reconstruction would be his return to God through the teachings of Christ, and the acceptance as a grace, of the moral burden He has imposed on society.¹

The significance of articles like Miss Thompson's is that they were printed in popular periodicals, where they were read by millions. The scholarly journals have long been aware of the

spiritual atrophy of the century, even though they have contributed much to that atrophy by their mandarin exclusiveness. On a popular level *Dr. Zhivago* has accomplished a minor breakthrough of concepts once widespread but in recent generations increasingly alien to the Western outlook. Pasternak in his magnificent novel is indeed restating the messages of Dostoyevsky and Whitman and of most great writers before them. He is reasserting the supremacy of the soul over its body and its environment. He is reasserting the immortality of man.

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The texts used in this work have been chosen for their availability as well as their accuracy. Thus wherever possible the highly reliable Modern Library edition of *Leaves of Grass and Selected Prose* of Whitman, which is available for under a dollar in any bookstore, has been used in place of editions obtainable only in the larger libraries. For Dostoyevsky standard translations, especially those of Constance Garnett, have been given as references. In many cases, especially in the quotations from *The Brothers Karamazov*, I have made slight changes in the translation where a shade of meaning or an emphasis seems to have been lost. I have consulted most of the literature on Dostoyevsky and Whitman in preparing this volume, and the influence of all of it is undoubtedly discernible. None of these works have been cited in the footnotes, however, except where I have quoted directly. I have confined the footnotes to the function of identifying longer quotations; a documentation of every idea I introduce would have made for a foolishly cumbrous apparatus.

In the process of fitting many detailed and sometimes wordy prose quotations into my text, economy and a regard for sense have dictated considerable abridgment and, rarely, an adjustment in punctuation. Omissions of any consequence I have marked by ellipses; obviously trivial ones I have left unmarked so as not to clutter my pages.

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15. *Ibid.*, p. 467.

16. *The Possessed*, p. 589.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
18. *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 274.
19. *Democratic Vistas*, p. 471.
20. *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 363.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 376.
22. *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions*, p. 111.
23. "Preface," *Leaves of Grass*, p. 454.
24. *Democratic Vistas*, pp. 471-477.
25. *Ibid.*, pp. 473-474.
26. *Diary of a Writer*, pp. 784-785.
27. *Raw Youth*, p. 465.
28. *Leaves of Grass*, p. 357.
29. *Ibid.*, pp. 355-356.
30. *Democratic Vistas*, p. 495.
31. *The Possessed*, pp. 253-256.
32. *A Gathering of Forces*, I, 247.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
34. *Democratic Vistas*, p. 461.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 469.
36. *The Possessed*, p. 674.

CHAPTER IX

1. Dorothy Thompson, "The Russian Poet-Prophets," *Ladies Home Journal*, Volume 76 (March, 1959), pp. 11ff.

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